TEL AVIV (R) - Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu and King Hussein have agreed to meet soon but have yet to set a date. Netanyahu's spokesman said on Wednesday. The King returned to Jordan on Tuesday to a tumultuous welcome after a six-month absence for cancer treatment in the United States. The two leaders last met in October at negotiations of the U.S.-brokered Wye River Middle East peace deal in Maryland, "King Hussein... called Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu (Wednesday) morning to thank him for his warm wishes for a speedy recovery. The two agreed to meet soon," Netanyahu's spokesman Aviv Bushinsky said in a

Volume 24 Number 7050

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, JANUARY 21-22, 1999, SHAWWAL 4-5, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils

Tragi FM to attend Arab League meeting'

CAIRO (AFP) - Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Said Al Sahhaf will attend Sunday's Arab League ministerial meeting here which will be devoted to the Iraqi crisis. League spokesman Talaat Harned said on Wednesday. Harned told reporters that Baghdad had informed the League of Sahhaf's purticipation in the one-day foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo which will discuss "all aspects of the Iraqi crisis." The meeting was called by Yemen to discuss also the possibility of convening an Arab summit following the four-day U.S.-British air campaign against Iraq. But the chances of holding a summit were sharply reduced when Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries announced their opposition to such a forum if braq is invited to attend.

tragi opposition groups eligible for **U.S. support**

WASHINGTON (AP) -President Bill Clinton has designated seven organisations opposed to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to receive U.S. support under the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998. "The president has made clear that the only long-term solution to the challenge posed by Saddam Hussein is a change of leadership in Baghdad," National Security Council spokesman David Leavy said Tuesday. "Today's report is a first step in that effort." The groups named were: Iraqi National Accord, the Iraqi National Congress, Islamic Movement of Iraci Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, Movement for a Constitutional Monarchy. the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in

India says foils bomb attack on U.S. embassy

NEW DELHI (R) - Indian police said on Wednesday they had arrested four people for alleged plans to bomb the United States embassy in New Delhi and its consulates in two other Indian cities. "One man was arrested in Delhi, and three from Calcutta," a police spokesman told Reuters. The man arrested in Delhi was identified as Sayed Abu Nasir. ³ Bangladeshi national. Police officials quoted city police chief V.N. Singh as saying that six others wanted by the police were believed to be associated with Saudi millionaire and dissident Osama Ben Laden, who was targeted by the United States in missile attacks on Islamist camps in Afghanistan

Colombia rebels suspend peace

BOGOTA (R) — Colombia's

nascent peace process was in turnial on Wednesday after Marxist rebels suspended talks in what was seen as a ploy to impose a tough negonating अञ्चलके rather than an immediate threat to go back to the batdefield. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) said late on Tuesday they were putting talks on hold - less than two weeks after they were officially launched -accusing the government of backing ultra-right death squads that massacred 140 people in a four-day blood bath earlier this month. The EARC insist they will only resume Preliminary negotiations when President Andres Pastrana brings the paramilitary squads to heel, arguing that the illegal Samps are part of the state's Undercover, counterinsurgency

King considering means of enhancing country's stability, democracy

AMMAN (J.T.) - His Majesty King Hussein reiterated on Wednesday that his primary concern is for Jordan's people, stability, progress and democracy.

In an interview with CNN, the day after his return home after a six-month absence during which he underwent chemotherapy treatment, the King said he was considering "what can we do to give Jordanians reassurance that the future is secure and is built on love and cooperation and understanding and not intimidation."

Asked about what he meant in a recent address to the nation by a "comprehensive" review" of Jordanian policies, the King said "my concern is not for me but for Jordan, its stability, its progress, its democracy [and] its people."

Asked about speculation about a change in the succession to the Throne, the King said he was not prepared to say what he had in mind for the time being.

"Please do not commit me to anything whatsoever because I really have not come up with [a decision]," the King said. "I have only thoughts and ideas... I have always had to take the final decisions and although this has been contested at times, it is my responsibility and I will come to it in the

Iraq has sent the United

Nations an 11-page critique of

the no-fly zones over northern

and southern leag, saying they

Iraq warned that it has the

right to protect itself against

the "continuous act of aggres-

sion." Iraq has routinely com-

plained about the U.S. and

British-patrolled no-fly zones.

but Tuesday's letter was unusual both in its length and

It also represented a swan-

song of sorts for Baghdad's

outgoing U.N. ambassador.

Nizar Hamdoon, who has

been engaged in years of heat-

ed exchanges with the Securi-

ty Council over international

restraints imposed following

Iraq's 1990 invasion of

Hamdoon is returning to

Baghdad to take up a position

In his letter. Hamdoon pre-

sented a near line-by-line cri-

tique of the American justifi-

cation for the no-fly zones

contained in "talking points"

he said were given recently to

in the foreign ministry.

have no legal basis.

its detail.

Kuwait.

The King spoke of the positive contribution made by HRH Crown Prince Hassan, but added that he thought "a Crown Prince has to work in the background to a very large extent, I gave him maybe more than he would normally have... because he has to be the

Prince Hassan, 51, was named Crown Prince in April

reserve.

Recalling that date, the King told CNN in the interview which was also broadcast by Jordan Television last night: "I thought at a certain point of time there was no substitute but to find a member of the family close by to take over... and it was I, who did bring about and canvass for the alternative in our Constitution to enable a brother to take over."

But, the King said, that, did not mean that it was "the end of the story." Originally, Article 28 of the Constitution instructs that, "The Royal title shall pass from the holder of the Throne to his eldest son. and to the eldest son of that son and in linear succession by a similar process thereafter. Should the eldest son die before the Throne devolves upon him, his eldest son shall inherit the Throne, despite the existence of brothers, to the deceased son," in 1965, the article was amended and a

clause added allowing the

Iraq submits critique of U.S.

justification for no-fly zones

Security Council members to

explain Washington's posi-

The explanation, Hamdoon

said, was delivered in the

wake of the almost daily

clashes in recent weeks

between Iraqi forces and U.S.

warplanes parrolling the zones, which the United

States and its allies imposed

after the Gulf war to protect

minority Kurds in the north

and Shiite Muslims in the

has the legal right to patrol the

airspace based on Security

Council resolutions that allow

U.N. member states to "use all

necessary means" to uphold

U.N. resolutions regarding

peace and security in the

there was no resolution that

explicitly authorised the no-

fly zones. "It is quite clear that

the position of the United

States is completely unfound-

As such, he said, Iraq has the

right under international law

"to exercise its legitimate right

ed," Hamdoon wrote.

Hamdoon, however, said

Washington has argued it

King to name one of his brothers as heir.

Prince Hassan was chosen at a time of regional upheaval. In a recent interview with

HRH Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, Prince Abdullah said the King took the decision to appoint Prince Hassan because there were lears for the King's life then.

"I've come back with a lot of thoughts and ideas ... but I think they are speculations until they become fact," the King said.

Agence France Presse (AFP) yesterday quoted political sources as saying that King Hussein was planning to separate the role of heir to the Throne from the responsibiliues of a regent running the country during his absence

"King Hussein is planning that from now on the Crown Prince will simply be the Monarch's reserve, and that he will no longer be involved in current affairs," the source told

The King emphasised in the CNN interview that he wanted to ensure Jordan would leave a mark in the Middle East and that he did not want Jordanians to be "a broken people as we see in so many parts of the

(See excerpts of the interview, printed out from CNN's website, on page 3).

to self-defence against such a

continuous act of aggression."

Since last month's U.S. and

British airstrikes, Baghdad has

increased its challenge of the no-fly zones, as well as U.N.

weapons inspections and the

U.N. humanitarian pro-

gramme in Iraq. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister

Tariq Aziz has also called into

question the borders of

Kuwait -- a move which has

raised serious concern within

the Security Council and

The source of our concern

is the attacks of Iraq on the

leaders of the region, plus the

fact that we are reinvoking the

atmosphere that existed in

1990, prior to the occupation

of Kuwait," Bahrain's U.N.

Ambassador Jassim Moham-

He spoke to reporters after

the council president. Ambas-

sudor Celso Amorim of

Brazil, told members about a

meeting he had with Iraqi

diplomats to convey the coun-

eil's concern about an article

Aziz wrote in the Al Thawra

mad Buallay said Tuesday.

Kuwait itself.



His Majesty King Hussein, accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince Ali, receives the chief-of-staff of the United Arab Emirates armed forces, Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, and the crown prince of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum, at his residence at Bab Al Salam (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King receives UAE, Bahraini officials

Arab, world leaders send messages of congratulations

AMMAN (Petra) -- His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday received messages and telephone calls from heads of state and govemment leaders of Arab and foreign countries congratulating him on his full recovery

and safe return to Jordan. The King received a telephone call from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who wished him continued good health and happiness and further progress and prosperity for

the Jordanian people. The King in reply expressed deep appreciation to the Saudi monarch and feelings reflecting the strong ties between the two countries. King Hussein wished King Fahd continued

good health. King Hussem received a telephone call from Libyan leader Muanimar Qadhafi, who congratulated the King on his recovery and voiced appreciation for King Hussein's national stand with

The King thanked Qudhati. wishing him and his people continued success and pros-

Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, emir of Kuwait, sent a message to King Hussein congratulating him on his recovery and safe return.

you return to your home and people to resume Jordan's march towards peace and towards further achieve-

a message to the King conery and wishing him good health and happiness.

minister and foreign minister

Riyadh, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister

"We are delighted to see Sheikh

ments," the Kuwaiti leader The emir of Bahrain, Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, sent gratulating him on his recov-

Messages of good wishes and congratulations were also sent by the Chinese president. Czech President Vaclav Havel, the prime minister of Bahrain, the deputy prime

Benyamin Netanyahu. Also Wednesday, King

Hussein received at his residence at Bab Al Salam the crown prince of Dubai. Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum, the chief of staff of the United Arab Emirates anned forces, Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahayan, UAE Minister of Information and Culture Abdullah Ben Zaved Al Nahayan, and commander of

Al Khalifeh. They conveyed to the King greetings and congratulations from the UAE and Bahraini

the National Guards of

Bahrain, Mohammad Ben Isa

The King voiced his appreciation of the Arab leaders' feelings and asked the delegations to convey his greetings to their leaders.

well as welcoming and seeing off the envoys when they departed were Their Royal Highnesses Princes Abdullah. Faisal, Hashem, and Ghazi Ben Mohammad, the King's advisor for tribal affairs, and Samih Battikhi, director of the General Intelligence

Department. In a statement upon arrival. Sheikh Mohammad Ben Rashed Al Maktoum said: We have come to congratulate the King on his safe return to his country. He is like a father to us, and we have very strong ties with His Majesty.

Describing Jordanian-UAE relations as excellent. Sheikh Mohammad added: "We are honoured to come here and meet His Majesty to congratulate him on his safe return to his country and people. We thank God for his safety."

Sheikh Mohammad said "relations between our two countries will be continually

of Kawait, Prince Salman regard to pan-Arab causes. Ben Abdul Aziz, prince of Attending the audience as Clinton asks Congress to approve aid to Jordan

By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN - U.S. President Bill Clinton on Tuesday asked Congress to approve extra aid

to Jordan. "I ask Congress to provide resources so that all parties can implement the Wye Agreement, to protect Israel's security, stimulate the Palestinian economy and support our friends in Jordan," Clinton said in his annual State of the Union

He also said that "all Americans can be proud that our lead-

address.

ership has renewed hope for lasting peace in the Middle

The extra assistance to Jordan was the main issue of discussion during His Majesty King Hussein's meeting with President Clinton on Jan. 5 at the White House.

"The U.S. administration has pledged to seek from Congress an extra \$100 million in economic assistance funds to Jordan," the Kingdom's ambassador to Washington, Marwan Mussher, told the Jordan Times on Jan. 11.

Muasher said the American administration reacted to the King's argument by pledging to seek an extra \$100 million in economic assistance that will

be divided over two years. "We expect to receive the first extra \$50 million in October 1999, and the rest in October 2000," Muasher said.

Last year, the U.S. Congress agreed to allocate \$225 million to Jordan in 1999, \$150 million in economic assistance and \$75 million in military aid. During a brief visit Amman on Dec. 15, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright pledged to seek from Congress an extra \$200 million in security assistance funds to "bolster Jordan's ability to cope with regional turnroil.

The extra \$200 million is to be divided over three years (approximately \$66 million per

Muasher explained that should Congress approve the additional packages, the Kingdom would receive a total of \$341 million, \$200 million in economic and \$141 million in military aid, in 1999.

EU still considering how to deal with Palestinian statehood declaration

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) - The European Union (EU) denied Wednesday that it was pressing Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to delay his plans to proclaim an independent state from May until

the end of the year. "For now, the EU has no position on this issue," the EU's special Mideast envoy, Miguel Morannos, told AFP.

"We are in discussions on the matter with both parties," said Moratinos, who was in Jerusalem with visiting Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahem (see story on page 2).

Moratinos was responding to remarks by a senior member of Israel's opposition Labour Party, Yossi Beilin, who said the 15-nation EU had agreed to issue a public appeal for Arafat to delay his statehood declara-

Beilin told Israel Radio earlier in the day that the EU had adopted a promonths to break the deadlock in the peace process and aven a major confrontation in May

"Under my proposal, Israel will declare itself ready to recognise a demilitarised Palestinian state, without its borders and its capital being defined, and to leave 50 per cent of the West Bank, if that state is proclaimed on January 1, 2000," Beilin said.

Later Wednesday, Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu said that even if Arafat postpones a declaration of statehood until the end of the year, Israel will not resume West Bank troop withdrawals promised in recent peace accords.

Netanyahu, who staunchly opposes Palestinian statehood, told reporters that it is not enough for Arafal to postpone the declaration.

Netanyahu said he must agree to negotiate on a permanent settlement.

posal he has been promoting for and also carry out other commitments he made in the Wye accord, such as clamping down on Islamists opposed to peace with Israel.

"If he carries out all his commitments... then yes, I think we would be able to move forward," Netanyahu told reporters.

The Palestinians maintain that they are carrying out their obligations and have accused Neumvahu of putting off the withdrawals in an attempt to win votes from hardline nationalists when he is up for reelection May 17.

Netanyahu made his comments while campaigning at Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda street market, a strong-hold of right-wing support. The right-wing government of

Netanyahu has vowed to respond severely to a unilateral declaration of independence, notably by unnexing parts of the West Bank still under

put to leaders of the European Union. the EU would promise Arafat to suppon Palestinian independence and press Israel to stop building Jewish settlements in occupied areas in exchange for a seven-month delay in his statehood declaration.

Moratinos insisted, however, that official EU policy at this point stopped short of backing Palestinian independence, an issue he said should be negotiated between the Palestinians and Israelis.

"We respect the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and do not exclude the option of statehood." he

The Palestinians assert that they have the right to declare a state May 4, when the five-year interim period set out in the Oslo peace accords expires. They have become more deter-

Beilin said that under the plan he Netanyahu government's refusal to carry out further Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank required by the U.S.-brokered Wye River peace accord signed in October.

Netanyahu has frozen the Wve accord, accusing the Palestinians of violating their security promises under the agreement.

Sueb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator with Israel, said Arafat did not rule out a possible postponement of the statehood declaration under certain conditions.

He told AFP that if the United States, Europe or other countries which sponsored the Oslo peace accord "meet and propose something definite, the Palestinian leadership is ready to study it."

But he said these governments would also have to take "a clear position to force Israel to stop unilateral mined to act unilaterally given the actions, especially Jewish sentement

activity, and to implement [the] Wye River agreement."

They also have to declare their support for the Palestinian right to self-determination, which means clearly an independent state within the 1967 borders and with Jerusalem as its capital," he said.

Palestinian officials and Western diplomats said earlier this week that the United States, backed by Europe. has put forward a proposal to delay any statehood declaration until the end of the year in exchange for international support for Palestinian selfdetermination.

Washington, Europe and the Labour Party fear that the tensions created by a May 4 declaration by Aratat would boost the chances of Netanyahu and other Israeli hardliners in national elections scheduled for

Irish PM calls for implementation of Israeli-Palestinian peace accord

GAZA CITY (AFP) - Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahem called Wednesday for the implementation of the Wye River accord calling for two more Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank.

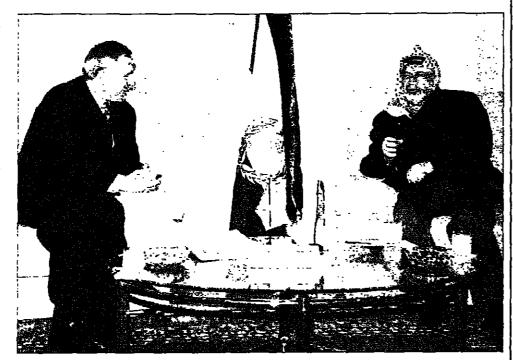
"What was negotiated should be implemented." Ahem told reporters after a meeting in Gaza City with Palestinian President Yasser

"I reported to President Arafat what was said to me. that the [Israeli] prime minister was prepared to negotiate and that the Wye River agreement was not frozen," said Ahem, who held talks with Benyamin Netanyahu Tues-

The Israeli prime minister carried out the first military redeployment after the Wye accord was signed in October. But he has put off indefinitely the further pullbacks scheduled for December and January, saying the Palestinians have not done enough to ensure Israeli security.

Commentators said the accord will be frozen until Israeli general elections May

Arafat has said many times that he will proclaim an independent state May 4, at the end of the interim period of: Palestinian autonomy under the Oslo accords, but has



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat speaks with Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern on Wednesday at Gaza International Airport in Rafah, in the Gaza Strip. Abern, who arrived from Tel Aviv, is ending a four-day trip to the Middle East (AFP photo)

been under pressure to delay the announcement until after

May 4 "is a sacred date for the Palestinians and for all the area in the Middle East." Arafat said Wednesday.

Netanyahu has said that if Arafat goes ahead with such a unilateral move, Israel will annex part of the West Bank. Ahern flew into Gaza Aviv Wednesday after visit-ing the grave of slain Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem and the nearby Yad Vashem memorial to the

He also met Netanyahu and former Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

During his four-day trip to

international airport from Tel. the Middle East. Ahern has also visited Irish troops serving with the United Nations in south Lebanon and met Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss.

> Thursday, becoming one of the few foreign leaders to spend a night in the territory.

Ahem is due to fly directly back to Dublin from Gaza

Israeli leaders discuss Pollard issue with Washington

productive

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's opposition leader said Wednesday he had contacted the White House to discuss the case of convicted Israeli spy Jonathan Pollard - a sign of the increasing politi-

cisation of the case in Israel. Opposition leader Ehud Barak told Israel Radio he had spoken with the White House Tuesday night about the case. He would not give

Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu said this week he was preparing a letter to be sent to U.S. President Bill

The fight for Pollard's release has become a centre of the campaign for Israeli national elections, slated for May 17. A popular move-ment to release Pollard has existed since his arrest in

Clinton had promised Netanyahu in October that he would review the case of the former U.S. Navy analyst. Netanyahu had made the review a condition of signing the Wye peace accord with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu recently wrote a letter to Clinton asking him to "put this unfortunate chapter behind us." He asked his political rival, Ehud Barak, to

Barak. who believes public appeals amount to counter-

badgering.

"I am really thinking of Pollard and am still dealing with him in recent days. Barak told Israel Radio. President Clinton knows my view and what needs to be done on this."

Netanyahu on Wednesday reiterated his call for Barak to sign. He had said earlier Barak's refusal "saddened and disappointed him.

Barak lashed out at Netanyahu for what he said was the issue's politicisation.

Netanyahu is not dealing with Pollard," he said. "He is willing to sacrifice Pollard and to impress people on television. He knows... this only purs off his release."

A native of South Bend. Indiana, Pollard was convicted to life imprisonment in 1985 for giving Israel tens of thousands of top-secret docu-

Netanyahu's request for Pollard's release at the peace talks nearly derailed the U.S.brokered Mideast accords.

Under last-minute pressure, Clinton promised to review Pollard's case. However, top U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, have advised against an early

'Satanic' U.S. trying to break up Iraq — paper

BAGHDAD (R) — An Iraqi newspaper on Wednesday lashed out at the "satartic" United States for trying to break up Iraq by its dealings in the Kurdish north of the

The official Al Iraq daily said U.S.-brokered agreements between Kurdish factions in the north of Irag "... came when America was escalating the crisis it manufactured against Iraq paving the way for the brutal aggression it

launched." "The phenomenon confirmed the desire of the United States to continue its conspiracy of dividing Iraq," the paper, a mouthpiece for progovernment Kurds, said, adding that the U.S. plan

would fail. It said the "mentality of the American Satan" aimed at silencing Kurdish opponents of the government in the north by offering agreements and paying them off with

dollars. In September, leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the two main factions in the Western-protected north, announced a U.Sbrokered deal designed to end a long-running violent power struggie between

them. After the 1991 Gulf War. Western powers declared the area closed off to the Iradi government and enforced a "no-fly" zone for Iraqi aircraft over the region. On Sunday, Iraq said a U.S. State Department official had visited northern Iraq and condemned the trip as a "flagrant aggression and interference in Iraq's internal affairs.

The newspaper said the United States had "given the chance for the Turkish military to penetrate Iraqi land and made the so-called 'safe haven' an arena where it could work freely to realise its aggressive aims."

Turkey has often sent troops into the area to strike bases it says are used by the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in that groups' separatist struggle against Ankara.

NEWS IN BRIEF

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Algerian cleric condemns Coca Cola

ALGIERS (AFP) - Coca Cola is sinful and illicit, according to an Algerian Muslim cleric quoted Wednesday in an Algiers daily. The iman pronounced the fatwa or religious edict at prayers held during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which ended in Algeria on Sunday, the Sawt Al Ahrar reported. The iman's explanations were not recorded but the paper noted he was known for his extreme views, including the conviction that women are "the source of all the world's ills." Pepsi came on to the market here six months ago. The imam's remarks on Coke's arch rival were not recorded.

'Saddam fails to realise he's a loser'

RIYADH (AFP) — Iraqi President Saddam Hussein fails to realise that he has lost all his showdowns with the United States ever since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, a Saudi newspaper said Wednesday. "The latest crisis in Iraq is a crisis at the intelligence level of the Iraqi regime," said the daily Al Madina which in general reflects the official Saudi view. The Iraqi regime has proved that it is clearly incapable of learning its lesson," from the invasion of Kuwait that led to Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War, it said. Al Madina said Saddam had "come out the loser in all its confrontations" with the United States. "The Iraqi regime is incapable of fathoming the changes on the international scene or even of realising that the United States is now the only superpower after the collapse of the former Soviet Union."

Japan PM worried over Mideast peace

TOKYO (AFP) - Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi Wednesday raised deep concern over stalled Middle East peace talks in a meeting with the visiting Jerusalem mawor. officials said. Obuchi expressed "deep concern" at the loss of the constructive climate towards peace, said foreign ministry officials after the 20-minute meeting at the premier's office. The prime minister also noted the sensitivity of Jerusalem itself in his meeting with the mayor, Ehud Olmert, who arrived in Japan Sunday for a week-long visit, they said: Obuchi said he hoped Israel would avoid any action that might cause friction.

Sharon urges Moscow not to help Iran

MOSCOW (AP) — Visiting Israeli Foreign Minister And Sharon urged Russia on Wednesday to block alleged leaks of weapons technologies by Russian companies to Iran, and to combat a recent wave of anti-Semitism by Russian lawmakers. Sharon also appealed to Russia to use its influence in the Middle East - namely, its good ties with Arab countries to promote peace in the region. During a meeting with his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov the two also discussed boosting Israeli-Russian trade and political relations. "I am above all interested in seeing the only Jewish state in the world remain secure," Sharon told reporters after the meeting

Canada submits proposal on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) - Canada on Tuesday sent UN: Security Council members a letter proposing changes to break the organisation's stalemate on Iraq sanctions. To unblock the debate, Canada is proposing that the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) monitoring Iraqi weapons programmes and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) meet under the chairmanship of a U.N. official. Jayantha Dhanapala, to evaluate progress made in Iraq's disarmament. Ottawa also proposed a meeting between the bureau for the Iraqi humanitarian programme and the sanctions committee, a meeting which would be chaired by the U.N. official in charge of humanitarian affairs, Sergio Vieira

Yemeni tribesmen damage pipeline

SANAA (AP) — Yemeni tribesmen have again damaged a pipeline operated by the American Hunt Oil Co., Yemeni security officials said Wednesday. An explosive device detonated late Tuesday set the pipeline ablaze, they said. The fire, which was still burning Wednesday, was being fed by crude leaking from the broken line. There were no reports of castalties. Tribesmen have targeted the Hunt Oil line in the past. Last month, tribesmen set off an explosive device that damaged the pipeline to try to force the government to improve

strike ahead of court appearance NICOSIA (AFP) — Thirteen area near the south-eastern Cypriot foreign ministry, the Police said the hunger members of the latest group of strike's objective was not resort of Ayia Napa Wednes-Lebanese authorities eventually allowed six of the boat peo-

Boat people in Cyprus go on hunger

boat people to reach Cyprus's shores began a hunger strike Wednesday, one day before they are scheduled to appear in court police and the United Nations said.

The 13, who are being held in the eastern town of Paralimni, have gone on hunger strike but 10 others from the same boat, who are being held in the southern city of Larnaca. have not joined them, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees said.

immediately clear. The boat people, whose

week-long remand in custody was set to expire Thursday, are

But the police said they were uncertain whether the court would extend the remand period or order deportation. It is unclear where they could be

A total of 29 illegal immigrants arrived in the Konnos

They told police they boarded a boat in the northern Lebanese port of Tripoli and scheduled to appear in Lar-paid up to \$2,000 for the voynaca count the same day, police age, expecting to be taken to said. Greece or Italy.

Cypriot authorities took the illegal immigrants by police launch back into Lebanese waters, but Lebanon dispatched gunboats to prevent them from landing in the port of Beirut.

After intervention by the

Somalis, a Burundian, a Sri Lankan and one person from the Palestinian territories. Illegal immigration has been

on the rise on this eastern Mediterranean island, with most of the aliens arriving by boat from nearby Lebanon.

ple - all of them Egyptians

The launch was forced to

return to Cyprus with the

remaining 23 — 18 Iraqis,

most of them Kurds, two

to enter the country.

Iran slams U.S. for sanctions on Russian institutes

TEHRAN (AFP) - Iran blasted the United States on Wednesday for slapping sanctions on Russian institutes accused of providing Tehran with nuclear technology, saying it was a "blatant example of interference."

"Iran's cooperation with these institutes was essentially scientific and industrial cooperation," foreign ministry

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PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 Canoon -- Superman

15:30 Science Fiction — Space

18:15Omar Ben Abdul Aziz

19:35 ... Comedy - Family Matters

20:00World's Museumes

18:15Omar Ben Abdul Aziz

19:15Words of Wisdom

19:30News Headlines

19:35 ...The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air

20:00Cinema, Cinema

20:30 Drama — Babylon - 5

21:10Doc. --- Full Circle

22:00News in English

22:30Drama — Millennium

23:10 Feature Film — "Attack of

PRAYER TIMES

.....(Sunrise) Duha

..Dhuhr

..Maghreb

..... 'Asr

the 50 Feet Woman"

05:10

06:31

11:47..

14:30

17:03.

18:24.

Medicine Woman

Friday Programmes

Field" Eps. 4

..French Prog.

....Le Journal

...French Prog.

.....News Headlines

...Cartoon — Plasmo

...Treasure Hunt

.. Le Journal

Thursday Programmes

Precinct

16:10 ...

19:00

19:15

19:30

spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi. The charge of nuclear cooperation is propaganda by the United States to damage Iran's relations with Russia." he

charged, quoted by the official

Iranian news agency IRNA. "This is a blatant example of interference in the domestic affairs of other countries." the spokesman added.

Iran's ambassador to Russia,

Mehdi Safari, on Saturday denounced as "disinformation" the U.S. allegations that Russia is transferring sensitive nuclear and missile technology to Iran.

The United States is "imitated by our [Iran-Russia] cooperation and is trying to harm it by spreading all kinds of disinformation," he said,

Last week, Washington slapped economic sanctions on

three Russian scientific institutes which it accused of collaborating with Iran.

Russia has denied the allegations and has reacted with fury. arguing that the United States has failed to provide concrete evidence to support the claim.

The U.S. ban came on top of similar sanctions imposed against seven other Russian institutes last July.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 5920740 Assemblies of God Church Tel.

St. Joseph Church Tel.4624590 Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366 Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811. St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox

20:30 Drama - Dr. Quinn the Church Tel. 4771751. Amman International Church 21:10 Mini Series "Playing the Tel. 5865897 German-speaking Evangelical ...News in English Congregation Tel. 5688404 22:30 Feature Film — "Asylum"

Tel. 4637440

4628052

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932 St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757 Church of the Annunciation

Greek Orthodox Church Tel. Church of Presentation, Swei-Beb Tel. 5920146 The Uniate Catholic Church

Tel. 4624757 English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190 Evangelical Free Church Tel. 4892679 The Baptist Church Tel.

The Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 4771331 The Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

ment of Meteorology

Cold weather conditions will prevail with temperatures rising slightly and skies cloudy to partly cloudy. Winds northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be cloudy to partly cloudy with expected scattered showers. Winds northerly moderate and seas rough.

..05/12 Amman Agaba10/20 Deserts. ...04/13

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 09, Aqaba 18 Humidity readings: Amman 85 per cent. Aqaba 42 per

Following are the temperatures expected today in the fol-

Ajloun	05/1
Jerash	
Um Qays	04/1
Madaba	
Petra	03/1
Dead Sea	11/2

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim......4620115

Dr. Faroug Nour...

____5601719

Dr. Mukhles Mazahrah 5150312

Firas Pharmacy5661912 Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730 Mayadah Pharmacy ...5537004 Rukn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

Dr. Ayman Abu Ideb 1021244468 Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275360

Dr. Ziyad Jghaitim ...(09)992991 Palestine Pharmacy..(09)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre....4637111 Civil Defence Department 5661111 Civil Defence Immediate Res-.....4630341 Civil Defence Emergency.....199 Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777 Fire Brigade......4617101 Blood Bank..... 4775121 Highway Police.....53-13402 Traffic olice......4896390 Public Security Dept.....4630321 Hotel Complaints......5605800 Price Complaints......5661176 Water & Sewerage Complaints 4897467 Amman Municipality Complaints4787}11 Telephone Information (directory assistance) Overseas Calls Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101 Abdali Tel. Repairs... ..5661101 Jordan Television 4773111

4774111

..5680100

Radio Jordan

Water Authority ...

J. Electricity Authority .5815615 Electric Power Co 4636381 RJ Flight Information 44-53200 Queen Alia Intl. Airport ...44-53200

HOSPITALS

The Arab Centre for Heart and Spe-

AMMAN:

cial Surgery5921199 The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7 Hussein Medical Centre...5856856 ...4630195 Khalidi Maternity......4644281/6 Akileh Maternity.......4642441/2 Jabai Amman Maternity....4642362 Malhas, J. Amman4636140 Palestine, Shmeisani5607071 Shmeisani Hospital5607431 Jordan Hospital5607550 University Hospital5353444 Al-Mussher Hospital 5667227/9 Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6 Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4777101/3 Al-Bashir 4775111/26 Army, Marka4891611/15 Queen Alia Hospital _____5157100 Arnal Hospital _____5607155 Al Amal Cancer Centre ...5353000

ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323 Zarga National Hospital _(09)900560 Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731 Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990

Princess Basma Hospital .(02)275555 Roman Catholic Hospital (02)272275 Ibn Al Nafees Hospital ..(02)7101372, (02)7103101

____(02)7102831, (02)7102011

Speciality Hospital(02)7(03100 Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

13:15 Rosary Sisters Hospital 14:15

14:10

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Rayal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights Sanaa (RJ) 08:00 08:25 ...Bombay (RI) 08:50Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ) 09:30 New Delhi (RJ) Beirut (RJ) ...Muscat, Dubai (RJ) 10:05Doha, Bahrain (RJ) 10:15 10:45Colombo (RJ) 15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ) 16:25 ...London (RI) Athens (RJ) ...Kuwait (RJ) 19:00 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ) 23:05 ...Lamaca (RI) 00:15Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)

DEPARTURES

04:10

For Thursday

Airport) (RW)

'Airport) (RW)

Airport) (RW)

QAIA; (RW)

For Friday

Airport) (RW)

Airport) (RW)

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18:45

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)

10:10. Aqaba (arriving at Marka

16:00. Aqaba (arriving at Marka

17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA)

22:50 Aqaba (artiving at Marka

Tel Aviv (arriving at

..Riyadh (SV) Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights Rome (AZ) 06:30 Beinut (RJ) Shariqah (AH) 10:35 Abu Dhabi, Al 'Ain (RJ)

11:25Tunis, Casablanc
12:05Kuwa
12:10Par
12:15Athens
12:15Londoi
12:30Amsterdam
19:45 Lamaca
20:10Cairo
20:30Jeddal
00:10Kuala Lumpur, Jakan
vv.10 Kuasi Cui piu, James
Other Wests

Other FlightsAmstenlam(KI.) 06:35 Damascus, London (BA)London (BA) 07:10 Frankfurt (LH) 14:45 ___Rryadh (SV) 15:00 ... Annabah, Algiers (AH)Rome (AZ) 09:30 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) "Doba (QR) 15:35 17:00 ...Damascus, Dubai (EK) 10:10_Aqaba (arriving at Marka 18:15 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF) 20:00 Beint (ME)
21:10 Tel Aviv (IX) 16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Cairo (MS) `21:40 22:50 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Moscow (SU) 01:55 . 02:15 Amsterdam (KL) 00:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at 04:45 Alexandria (BA)

> Royal Wings (RW) Flights ... For Thursday 07:00 Agaba (from Marks Arr port) (RW) 08:30...Agaba (from Marka Air port) (RW) 20:30 ... Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW) 22:00 Tel Aviv (from QAIA)

For Friday 07:00 Agaba (from Marks: As DORU (RW) 08:30 Aqaba (from Marks A) port) (RW) 13:30 Gaza (from Marka Ampart) (RW) 16:30 Tel Aviv (from Mark) And Dort (RW) port) (RW) 20:30 _Agaba (from QATA)

Ross Historiess Pr ReBer Zeid, direct te Hasnemite Ch kee S. Idiers beca. Needs w 11:30Shannon, Chicago (RJ) frend. 25515tance handr ing WAS events will ns (RJ) Meet with members c ıs (RJ) Attes Forces, s \$0.575 - 57.1 न (RJ) n (RD) 12 Sect-12-25 U.N. a (PJ) tale as well as key r ienzance the d 10 (RJ) Belli com: who are ь(RJ) gainot na (RI) emove landines : 55 Ben victims. Landmine, have Constitute 2 se Bullianian problem lorder, especially Valley location incation, the country's most the farmiand rests.

Council of I Terrorism,

AMMAN (Petra) = Head of the Coun wab Interior Min thmad Saleh Wedr thred here to d with senior Minist hierior officials pr lions for the council' which wi leld under the Patronage on Januar th are strivel state Saleh expressed his is, for the recov His Majesty King H and his safe remm f We are delight have with our for brothers their joy an

King Hussein: Coming home is coming home to one's family 'It was a moving moment that I have been waiting for for a long, long time'

Following are excerpts from a CNN transcript of the Jan. 20 interview with His Majesty King Hussein conducted by CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour in Amman.

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AMANPOUR: Your Majesty, thank you for joining us on this day. Yesterday, we were here. we saw you pilot your own plane into Amman. You were escorted by a dramatic 12-jet airbome escort. It looked amazing. How did you feel when you stepped off out of that plane yesterday and saw your family, and everybody there ready to welcome you?

KING HUSSEIN: It was a moving moment that I have been waiting for for a long, long time and one that I was wondering whether it would come. But with a lot of faith and determination and faith in God, of course, and with all the family support I received, particularly from my wife and children and everyone at the medical institute, I had to do my best. And so we get through it, another ordeal, and a very, very difficult one at that. I learnt a lot, but coming home is - coming home to one's family and one's people and the country one has lived through ever since one was born and tried to serve to the best of my ability, certainly, during - well over 40 years now.

AMANPOUR: Your Majesty, you said that you wondered at some point whether you would make it home, whether you would get back. Was there a moment where you feared that you would come back?

KING HUSSEIN: No, I don't think that I had any questions, really, in that regard except that when, I mean, I realised that I'm getting on in years and that the problems that seem to appear from time to time are more numerous than they would be, but we approach that with a lot of honesty and a lot of clarity and transparency. And I have a feeling that, maybe others don't agree with me, that one should tell everybody exactly where one is on the physical side and every other respect.

AMANPOUR: Well, you certainly broke with tradition. In this region, there are many elderly leaders here, some of whom are sick and none of whom have really told their people what is wrong with them, if anything. But can we get back to what your plans are now. You've come home, all the Jordanians are wondering what's on your mind. There's been a lot of speculation. You've talked about a comprehensive review. What, they wonder, does that mean?

KING HUSSEIN: Well, let me put it in the following way. First of all, I have always been a

'... My concern is not for me... It has been for Jordan, its stability. its progress, its democracy, its people'

fatalist, and I have always felt that there is a beginning to life and an end to life. And I feel it more than any time in the past.

Therefore my concern is not for me. It has never been for me anyway. It has been for Jordan, its stability, its progress, its democracy, its people — raising their heads, sharing and building up the future that is their right, not a broken people as we see in so many parts of the world. So, when you spend six months away, you watch, apart from the fact that I always watch, how things move, what tendencies there are, what trends, what weaknesses there may

And I think I've come back with a lot of thoughts and ideas. There've been many speculations but I think they're all speculations until they become fact.

AMANPOUR: There's been a great deal of

speculation about your successor. Is there any reason for that? Are you going to change the current plan where Crown Prince Hassan, your brother, is designated as your successor?

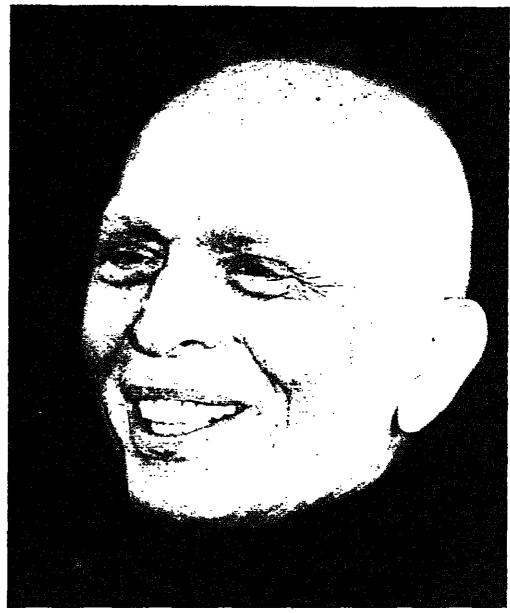
KING HUSSEIN: Prince Hassan has done an awful lot of good during the years that he has spent by my side. Personally I choose to again demonstrate that it is not a question of personal objective or of greed or anything else. I felt it is an important time that there was no substitute but to find a member of the family close by to take over. My brother, Mohammed, concurred at the time. And it was I who did bring about and canvass for the alternative in our Constitution that enables a brother to take over at times. But that didn't mean at all that it was the end, and I think a Crown Prince has to work in the background to a very large extent. I gave him maybe more than he would normally have because he has to be the reserve, - but when he gets too involved sometimes he gets the same kind of criticism that I do or maybe worse or otherwise.

So there are all these factors that we have to think about now and not in terms of Prince Hassan, this is not the sole focus of my attention at this stage, but what can we do to give Jordanians the assurance that the future is secure, that it's built on love and cooperation and understanding and not intimidation, and that it is a country that is going to continue to leave an impression on this part of the world.

AMANPOUR: So, sir, is that a yes or a no? Are you going to change the line of succession?

KING HUSSEIN: I'm not prepared to say anything, so please don't commit me to anything whatsoever because I really haven't come up with anything - I have only thoughts and ideas, and I've always had to take the final decisions and, although this has been contested at times, its my responsibility and I will come to it in an appropriate time.

The full interview is scheduled to be aired on CNN's programme "Newsstand" on Sunday.



His Majesty King Hussein (AFP photo)

U.N. to study landmines' social, economic threats

AMMAN (J.T.) — An tary sources estimate that UNMAS plan will also appraisal of the humani- over 300,000 landmines address the needs of disianan anu socio-economic threats posed by some 250,000 landmines along the Jordanian-Israeli border will be conducted by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in cooperation with the Government of Jordan at

the end of the week. An assessment team from UNMAS, headed by Colonel Wolfgang Hirsch, will arrive on Friday, 22 January, for a week-long mission at the request of Jordan's permanent mission to the United Nations in New York.

The five-member UN team will conduct site visits and meet with His Royal Highness Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid, director of the Hashemite Charity Society for Soldiers with Needs which extends assistance to survivors. landmine UNMAS experts will also meet with members of the Armed Forces, senior officials. government Amman-based U.N. officials as well as key representatives of the diplomatic corps who are supporting initiatives to

Landmines have long

dan since 1948, causing approximately 400 civil-ian injuries and 88 deaths to date. Today, ten per cent of the population

'More than half of the world's 100 million landmines are buried in the

Middle East' continue to live in areas

littered with the explosive

devices. Although Jordan has already cleared 65,000 landmines along its western borders since the signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1994, an estimated 250,000 mines continue to pose a threat to residents and hinder economic development. The UNMAS mission will define the scope of the landmine problem in contaminated areas of the country, identify opportunities for mine action initiatives and prepare recommendations for the implementation of demi-

ning programmes. The

abled landmine victims. the resettlement of inhabitants in mine-infested areas and delivery of humanitarian aid.

Last July, Jordan became the fifth Arab country to sign the 1997 Ottawa Convention, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty, which prohibits the use, production and stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines.

The signing took place in conjunction with the first landmine conference in the region, hosted in Jordan by the Landmine Survivors Network - a movement which enjoy the support of Her Majesty Queen Noor for a worldwide ban on land-

More than half of the world's 100 million landmines are buried in the Middle East with the highest concentration in Egypt. The UNMAS mission to Jordan underscores a resolution adopted by the U.N. General Assembly which emphasises the world body's role in promoting mine clearance, raising awareness on the issue and providing assistance to landmine survivors.

Human rights society appeals to international federation to rally against economic sanctions, further strikes on Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Society being violated daily in Iraq where more eyes of the whole world while the embargo imposed on the Iraqi people Rights to help end "the dangerous violations of human rights" inherent in the continued sanctions on the Iraqi people which has to date caused the death of more than half a million people.

In a message sent to Patrick Baudouin, the federation's president, the JSHR said the appeal "draws attention to the dangerous violations directed at the Iraqi citizens' human rights resulting from the embargo and the unjustified military acts of aggression and the collective punishment imposed on them for more than eight years."

The message, sent by the JSHR President Suleiman Sweiss, noted that "the basic right, that of the right to life, is

for Human Rights (JSHR) has than half a million women, children appealed to the Paris-based and old people have died in the past International Federation of Human years due to the shortage of food, medicine and medical equipment. Last November it was announced in Baghdad that 9,000 Iraqis mostly children and elderly people died as a direct result of the embargo," the appeal pointed

> "These horrible violations have aroused among the Jordanian people in general and the JSHR in particular feelings of anger, sorrow and condemnation, and private Jordanian organisations from all sectors have been launching a campaign to collect donations to help the Iraqi people through their ordeal," according to the statement.

> "It is most regrettable to see this ordeal continuing for years before the

humanitarian conscience and the will of free nations are unable to stop these ugly crimes against the Iraqi nation which has made substantial contributions to human civilisation," the appeal continued.

Urging the federation to take prompt action to deal with the situation, the appeal said: "We are not writing to you to shed tears or to express pain which we feel every day over the Iraqi people's tragedy, but rather we are demanding you to act, through every available channel, to halt this crime being committed against humanity and the Iraqi people's human rights. We demand that you take prompt and specific action towards organising an international campaign to lobby for the lifting of the unjust sanctions and the

and to prevent further military attacks against Iraq like those that occurred in the past month."

"Our demand stems from our deep commitment to safeguard all human rights which are rightful for all nations, and from our feeling of the common humanitarian pain," said the appeal.

It added, "we are quite confident that through your endeavour to protect human rights around the world you will respond favourably to our appeal. because we are confident that the pain and suffering of 20 million tracis are affecting your feelings too and prompting you to seek action that would save the Iraqi people and safeguard their basic right to life."

News In Brief

King Hussein receives cables

AMMAN (Petra) - His Majesty King Hussein on Wednesday received congratulatory cable from Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Hadi Majali. Majali wished King Hussein continued good health and a happy life, saying that Jordanians' rejoicing of the King's return is a clear sign of their love of their leader. The King received another cable from head of the Public Security Department General Nsouh Muhieddin congratulating on his full recovery and safe return home. He also expressed his pride, as well as that of PSD personnel, in the King's leadership. Jordanians thronged the streets to welcome the King following his arrival in Amman after undergoing six months of cancer chemotherapy in the U.S.

Public holiday announced

AMMAN (Petra) - On the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's safe return home, all ministries, government departments and public institutions will of serve a holiday today (Thursday), according to a communique issued by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh. To mark the occasion, the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Governor Ziad Fariz also issued a communique announcing today as an official holiday for banks and financial institutions. Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in Jordan Gunar Loffberg decided to close all UNRWA institutions in Jordan today to mark the occasion. Government departments, public institutions and banks have been observing an official holiday since last Sunday, January 17, in observance of 'Eid Al Fitr, which fell on Monday,

Weather to remain cold

AMMAN (J.T.) - The weather will remain relatively cold today despite a slight rise in temperatures, a Meteorology Department source said Wednesday. The source said the low pressure affecting the Kingdom for the past four days began receding Wednesday afternoon. The department expects a gradual rise in temperature over the next three days, with temperatures reaching 12 degrees Celsius today, dropping to five at night. The low pressure has caused heavy rainfall in the north of the Kingdom, with Ras Munif in Ajloun area registering the highest rainfall: 63 millimetres over the last four days, followed by Deir Alla with 42 millimetres and Irbid with 40 millimetres. In Aqaba the weather will be partly cloudy with a possibility for scattered showers. Expected temperatures today are 21 degrees Celsius, dropping to 11 at night.

Refinery reports cylinder surplus

AMMAN (Petra) - General Manager of the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company Abdul Wahab Zu'bi on Wednesday called on gas distibutors to obtain their gas cylinders from the company saying that there is a surplus of cylinders. He added that storage capacity stands now at 14,000 tonnes of gas for the time being.

Police investigate death of 22-year-old man

AMMAN (J.T.) — Police are investigating the death of a 22-year-old man found dead in a deserted area of Qweismeh Wednesday morning, according to official sources.

Bandar M.'s body was found by his family at 7:00 a.m. on Wednesday several metres away from his relatives' house, the source said.

The victim's family informed authorities that their son had left the house to celebrate His Majesty King Hussein's safe return to the Kingdom on Tuesday.

"But their son failed to return home, and his family thought that he spent the night at his relatives' house where the body was found." the source said.

An autopsy performed by a team of pathologists at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine showed no indication of violence.

"We found no traces of violence, injuries or strangulation on the victim's body," Pathologis, Hani Jahshan said.

He added that blood and tissue samples were sent to the Criminal Lab to determine if the man was murdered or if he died of natural

causes. "There is a big possibility that the youth might have frozen to death," one source told the Jordan Times.

Police confirmed the incident and said they were investigating the case.

What's Going On

Play

"Al Zaroub" at the Royal Cultural Centre on Saturday Jan. 23 at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition of ceramics, sculpture, and abstract (plastic) art by Jordanian, Iraqi, Syrian, Lebanese, and Sudanese artists at Hammourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5536098), until Jan. 25.

"The Warm Winter" - works by several artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Um Uthaina (Tel. 5526932), until

The Tenth Anniversary Exhibition of Contemporary Arab Artists at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh (Tel. 4643251/2), until Jan. 28.

remove landmines and assist victims. constituted a serious humanitarian problem for Jordan, especially along the Jordan Valley and northern frontier, where the country's most valuable farmland rests. Mili-

خنفا يهزا المتعادين er Piche River. Council of Interior Ministers to meet in Amman Terrorism, narcotics trafficking on the agenda الدينة مندونيمالة مندونيمالة

AMMAN (Petra) — The Head of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers Ahmad Saleh Wednesday arrived here to discuss with senior Ministry of interior officials prepara-

tions for the council's 16th session, which will be held under the Royal Patronage on January 29. In an arrival statement, Saleh expressed his happiness for the recovery of His Majesty King Hussein

er Friday and the and his safe return home. We are delighted to share with our Jordanian brothers their joy and happiness for the return of King Hussein, who has made and is making every effort possible to support Arab solidarity in all fields," he told the Jordan

News Agency (Petra). Praising King Hussein's pan-Arab positions, Saleh said: "Contemporary history will record the King's positive contributions to serving Arab causes and defending the rights and achievements of the Arab

peoples." about the Speaking agenda of the three-day meetings, which will be

first time, Saleh said the conference will discuss such issues as fighting terrorism, control of narcotic trafficking, an Arab strategy to addressing the illegal use of narconics and their negative effects on the mind. He said that draft model security agreement, which the Arab countries can use to inter-Arab conclude agreements, and a model draft law on extraditing criminals and fugitives from law will also be discussed.

held in Amman for the

Police pull guns back from Kosovo massacre site

- Serb police had withdrawn their weapons Wednesday from positions around the site of an alleged massacre in Kosovo, although troops could still be seen moving around in woods above the

An anti-aircraft gun which had been placed Monday on a hill above Racak, about 26 km south of the Kosovo capital Belgrade. Pristina, had disappeared.

"We haven't heard anything as of this morning." said one of a group of international monitors standing on the hill.

"It was quiet last night. Quiet so far this morning." Sandy Bivth. spokesman for international monitors in Kosovo.

Signs warning of mines had been placed beside a track leading to the hill. Troops on foot were in nearby woods.

The monitors future in the province has been thrown into doubt by an

NEAR RACAK, Serbia (R) order from Belgrade to began work Tuesday on the expel the head of their mission. William Walker, for accusing Serb security forces of massacring 45 ethnic Albanian villagers in Racak last Friday.

The Yugoslav governinitially ordered Walker to leave the country by Wednesday afternoon. but Tuesday unexpectedly gave him an extra 24 hours. He is currently in

Tuesday NATO generals flew to Belgrade to try to President Slobodan Milosevic to stop his latest offensive, which

the monitors said Monday had widened to three other villages around Racak. Diplomats said the talks had made no headway.

Western officials found it hard to explain the apparent reprieve for Walker. "I simply don't know.

except that it keeps the eye on Walker rather than autopsies and stuff like that," one said.

A Yugoslav forensic team

bodies of the dead, retrieved from Racak after security forces had pounded what they believed were ethnic Albanian rebel positions around the village for two days.

The head of the forensic team told Reuters there were no signs any of the victims had been executed.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), whose monitors were allowed to witness the autopsies, said examinations had so far been performed on three out of 40 bodies. It had no comment on the Yugoslav official's assessment.

The Serb-run Media Centre in Kosovo said a policeman reported killed Tuesday was the deputy chief of police for the town of Urosevac, near the scene of the fighting, adding that he had been killed trying to protect investigators probing the alleged massacre. There was no independent



Supreme Allied Commander Europe, U.S. General Wesley Clark, centre, arrives at NATO headquarters, in Brussels, to attend a meeting with NATO ambassadors to discuss the situation in Kosovo. Man at right is unidentified (AP photo)

NATO generals deliver Milosevic a message

the brink" of action.

he has even that long."

Asked in an interview with

the British Broadcasting Corp.

if Milosevic still has a few days

to manoeuvre, the ambassador

said: "I wouldn't guarantee that

Washington.

Department spokesman James

P. Rubin said that, based on ini-

tial reports of the meeting. "We

are not encouraged." Rubin

once again described the expul-

sion of Walker as unacceptable.

hinting that the verification

mission faces an uncertain

"It's hard to see how an inde-

pendent verification mission

can operate when the chief of

mission is expelled for report-

Late Tuesday, the U.N.

Security Council unanimously

adopted a statement that does-

n't blame either side for the

Racak massacre, but calls for a

full investigation. The state-

ment also urges the Yugoslav

government to allow Walker to

remain and to work with the

In a statement distributed by

the Yugoslavia's Tanjug news

agency. Milosevic said his gov-

emment remains committed to

a political solution. But he said

the government has a "legiti-

mate right to fight against ter-

rorism." Milosevic said interna-

tional pressure on a sovereign

country fighting terrorism

"cannot be justified." Milosevic

said ethnic Albanian rebels had

U.N. war crimes tribunal.

ing the truth." he said.

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) anonymity, described them as President Slobodan Milosevic is defending his right to crush Kosovo's ethnic Albanian rebels, despite a NATO warning to halt the viclence delivered personally by the alliance's top generals.

During a meeting Tuesday with Gens. Wesley Clark and Klaus Naumann, Milosevic showed no sign of backing down on his refusal to allow a U.N. war crimes court to invesrigate last week's massagre of

45 ethnic Albanians in Racak. As a result, chief war crimes prosecutor Louise Arbour is abandoning her effort to enter Kosovo to investigate the massacre. Her spokesman. Mark McEvoy, said Arbour would return Wednesday to The Hague from neighbouring Macedonia after being refused

entry twice this week.

During the meeting with Clark, the American who serves as supreme allied commander in Europe, and Naumann, the German who chairs the NATO Military Committee, Milosevic said he would cooperate with the international mission verifying the Oct. 12 cease-fire agreement. but not its American head, William Walker.

Walker has been ordered to leave the country after blaming Serb forces for the Racak mas-

The two generals flew to Belgrade to warn Milosevic that the alliance would not tolerate further breaches of the ceasefire, which narrowly averted NATO airstrikes in October.

The generals left Belgrade for NATO headquarters in Brussels, Belgium late Tuesday without issuing any statement. They were briefing NATO ambassadors Wednesday. A Western source close to the

talks, speaking on condition of

launched more than 500 "terrorist attacks" since the October truce. He also defended actions by Serb security forces, such as the

attacks on Racak, saying they

"not completely successful but attack on civilians." Serb police we made progress in certain have moved the bodies of the Racak victims to a morgue in areas." He refused to elaborate. Alexander Vershbow, the the provincial capital Pristina. American ambassador to The chief Serb investigator. NATO, said the alliance is "on Danica Marinkovic, said preliminary examination showed

no evidence of a massacre. Tanjug identified one of the women killed in Racak as a "daughter of the leader of tethnic Albanian) terrorists" in the village. Tanjug said the woman. who was not identified, was "actively involved" in the rebel

officials Serio Wednesday three bodies had already been examined.

movement

A spokeswoman for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva. Judith Kurnin, expressed "shock and horror at the massacre and said two infants in a group of refugees who fled Monday subsequently died of the cold.

Meanwhile, Serb forces bombarded rebel positions in the hills surrounding Racak on Tuesday. An Associated Press photographer said one Serb policeman was killed and two were wounded.

Despite the impasse, diplomatic efforts are continuing to resolve the crisis. Russia's deputy foreign minister. Alexander Avdeyev, arrived in Belgrade Tuesday night and sources said he was meeting Milosevic Wednesday moming. The sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

The chairman of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Norwegian Foreign Minister Knut Vollebaek, was expected soon in Belgrade, possibly Wednesday.

Since the crackdown began last year, an estimated 2,000 people have been killed and nearly 200,000 people are displaced across the province.

the Central Clinical Hospital earlier, the news agency reported. Chief presidential spokesman Dmitry Yakushkin said the ulcer had stopped bleeding and doctors had detected the first signs that the open sore was responding to treatment and beginning to heal. Doctors

NEWS IN BRIEF

Doctors rule out

immediate surgery for Yeltsin

MOSCOW (AFP) - Doctors have ruled out immediate surgery to treat President Boris Yeltsin's ulcer, medical sources cited by the Interfax news agency said

Wednesday. Kremlin doctors opted to continue to prescribe drugs to treat Yeltsin's large ulcer, following an internal probe of the president's stomach conducted as

had allowed Yeltsin to leave his hospital bed and walk

around his suite of rooms, as well as study documents at

Pope urges end to Kosovo,

Sierra Leone violence

minese:

VATICAN CITY (R) - Pope John Paul Wednesday made an impassioned appeal for an end to violence in Kosovo and Sierra Leone that he said had been characterised by "ferocity and ruthlessness". "We ask God with renewed faith that, where hate abounds, he may bring his fatherly mercy, reawakening the consciences of those who shape their people's destiny and moving the souls of everyone to thoughts of peace. the Pontiff said at his regular weekly audience. NATO has warned Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic it is poised to launch air strikes to force an end to his iron-fisted policy in the rebellious southern Serb province of Kosovo, where 90 per cent of the population are ethnic Albanians. International monitors reported that 45 civilians were killed in one Kosovo village at the weekend, and blamed security forces. Milosevic issued a statement saying the deaths had occurred in the security forces' fight against terrorist gangs. The Pope made special mention of the Archbishop of Freetown, Joseph Henry Ganda, who has been kidnapped by rebels in the Sierra Leone capital, and other missionaries who are also being held. "I appeal to those responsible to release them... as soon as possible, the Polish-born Pontiff said.

France sees compromise with Germany over nuclear reprocessing

PARIS (AP) — France's industry secretary said Wednesday he was confident a compromise would be reached with Germany to ease the impact of its decision in stop sending spent nuclear fuel out of the country for reprecessing. German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and his junior coalition parmer, the environmentalist Greens, have agreed to end the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel abroad as of Jan. 1, 2000. The move is part of a plan to wear Germany off nuclear power. The government hopes to introduce the new draft law on nuclear power in parliamenthis month. But French and British officials are insisting that Germany honour lucrative reprocessing contracts. France's state-owned nuclear reprocessor COGEMA says Germany's withdrawal from contracts running until 2010 would cost the company more than 30 billion francs (45% billion euros/\$5.3 billion). In an interview with radio station RTL. French Industry Secretary Christian Pierrel san conditions were in place to allow a Franco-German commission studying the issue to "find a compromise." "There are contracts between COGEMA and private German electricians. And there are texts that have the value of a treaty between France and Germany dating back to 1989 and 1990. Pierret said. Schroeder said Monday he expects no compensation claims from France or Britain. "I have read the contracts, and I see no cause for damage claims from companies or governments," he said.

India to flaunt Agni missile at national day march

NEW DELHI (R) - India will unveil its entire range of missiles including the controversial ballistic missile Agni at its annual republic day parade next week, local media said Wednesday. For the first time, Agni, the short-range Trishul, medium-range Akash and anti-tank missile Nag which are now undergoing various stages of technical trials would be displayed in the parade," the Press Trust of India news agency quoted parade commander S.K. Awastings saying. India's Bharatiya Janata Party government w carried out underground nuclear explosions last years said it is committed to developing the 2,500 km range which Western experts say is nuclear-capable. The mediate-range Agni was last test flown in February Since then, successive Indian governments have accused of mothballing the project under Western personal India uses the parade, held each year on Jan. 26 cm anniversary of the country becoming a republic, to show its defence capabilities and cultural diversity. "It will to parade of the millennium. Like last year, it will be hours long with wide participation projecting Indias tary prowess as well as its rich and diverse cultural itage," Awasthy was quoted as saying.

UNHCR expects to send all Cambodians back from Thailand

BANGKOK (AP) — A group of 405 Cambodian refuglefit their camp in Thailand's Sisaket Province for his Wednesday morning, bringing the number of returns almost 12,000 in the past 15 months, the office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees sa spokesman for the UNHCR in Bangkok said it expensed all Cambodian refugees in Thailand back home. in a few months if there is no sudden obstacle. Jo. 25.000 Cambodians remain in three Thai camps. Cheung in Surin province, Phu Noi in Sisaket province. Chong Khao Plu in Trad province. Virtually all fled July 1997 coup d'état sparked factional fighting in areas. "We will close down the camps when last grown refugees depart for home," said the UNHCR of speaking on condition of anonymity. Wednesd returnees crossed from Thailand's Aranyaprathet distriction the trading town of Poipet. The refugees from 94 1200 have applied to resettle in eight different province UNHCR spokesman in Geneva. Judith Kunait Tuesday that more than 1,000 refugees have been to ed from Phu Noi camp since the beginning of the year said they had chosen not to return to the nearby area former Khmer Rouge guerrilla base of Anlong wather to several eastern provinces, including Mondulkin. A UNHCR team visited Mondulkiri la and following their assessment, a first group returnees left the transit centre in the northeastern Sisophon Saturday for Mondulkiri, where they were posed to arrive Wednesday.

E. African presidents to consider regional community

ARUSHA, Tanzania (AFP) - The heads of state of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda are to meet Friday to study advanced plans for an East African Community integrating their 80 million people.

Presidents Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya and Yoweri Museveni of Amin. Uganda, meeting in the northern Tanzanian town of will consider progress on a draft treaty which officials say could be

signed as early as July. A significant degree of integration is already in place. The shillings of the three countries are interconvertible while a common flag is already in use, if rarely seen. A common passport, valid within the three countries, is set to be launched.

The community would take over from East African Cooperation, established in November 1994 to harmonise tariffs and business practices and ease the flow of citizens across the bor-

The new entity would eventually be open to such nearby countries as Rwanda

Kenya and Tanzania each have populations of some 30 million people, and Uganda about 20 million. Rwanda and Burundi each have populations of around six million.

Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda converted British colonial cooperation, established in 1947, into a community after they gained independence in the early 1960s, setting up common air, rail and maritime services, and regional univer-

community foundered in 1977 under the pressures of the socialist policies of then Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere and the bellicose regional foreign policy of then Ugandan dictator Idi

Prospects are encouraging all three countries are following the same International Monetary Fund and World Bank

guidelines. parastatal companies and generally opening up their although economies. progress is uneven and corruption a common problem. Uganda is landlocked, but

its imports come through both Dar es Salaam. Tanzania's main port, and Kenya's Mombasa port, also on the Indian Ocean. making the idea of a community attractive to both local and foreign exporters and importers.

The harmonisation of tariffs and other taxes and business practices is still at an early stage, though, and with drought facing the region, Kenya, with its dominant regional economy, has banned the export of maize to Tanzania, where it would fetch higher prices than at home.

All three countries boast elected presidents and legislatures, and the regional foreign policies of Tanzania and Kenya are basically

Uganda, the only country facing internal rebellions, is fighting in the foreign aid.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Its troops are fighting alongside rebels there trying to overthrow President Laurent Kabila, but the Ugandan troops are ostensibly aiming to wipe out the rear-bases its own rebels maintain in the east of the

Uganda is also confronting Sudan, its neighnow. observers say, because bour, with Kampala and Khartoum accusing each other of supporting each other's rebels.

But regional military privatising cooperation is part of the east African agenda, and Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda have already set up a common defence affairs unit in Arusha to coordinate training, common security. and disaster handling.

Ministers preparatory meetings are looking at the eventual inclusion of Rwanda and Burundi in the community. but Rwandan Foreign Minister Anastase Gasana told AFP Tuesday that the east African presidents were not planning to make any decision on this at this

"Our adhesion is not on the agenda," he said, adding that the summit would look at inclusion "once internal problems are settled."

Those include civil wars in both Rwanda and Burundi, involvement by their government troops and rebels in the DRC though Bujumbura denies its troops are there - and fragile economies dependent on exports of tea and coffee, but even more on

S. Africa police arrest most-wanted fugitive

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — Police have arrested South Africa's most-wanted fugitive. a former African National Congress militant whose escape was a major embarrassment for authorities, officials said Wednesday.

Colin Chauke was captured Tuesday night in Nelspruit, 320 kilometres east of Pretoria, the capital police said.

During a brief court appearance. he was ordered detained until a June 1 hearing. Authorities said he would be held in a maximum security jail.

"We will not take any chances." said prison

spokesman Rudi Potgieter. Chauke, 30, was arrested in Pretoria in October 1997 in connection with a million rand (\$210,000) robbery of a cash depot. He is a suspected in several similar robberies.

He escaped from a Pretoria jail two months later after holding a prison guard hostage with a handgun. Police made his recapture a top priority, and had set a Dec. 25, 1998, deadline.

Chauke had been a member of Umkhonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), the armed wing of the ANC before it won

power in the country's first all-race election in 1994. The ANC's right-wing, mainly white political opponents sought to link Chauke with the party. The Freedom Front said it hoped Chauke would provide information on alleged involvement in crime by ANC members.

"If indications are confirmed that (Spear of the Nation) members are continuing to make the country ungovernable through crime, the ANC would have to accept full responsibility," Freedom Front spokesman Kallie Kriel

'Washington will not return Stasi files to Bonn'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States will not return to Bonn the complete files from former East Germany's Stasi spy agency, but will continue to allow Germany access to them, The Washington Post reported Wednesday.

The report, quoting informed government sources, contradicted German press reports over the weekend that an agreement had been reached to return the files in exchange for magnetic tapes of the Stasi which German authorities recently decoded. One U.S. official suggested

German officials "appear to be putting out stories in the press to have greater access to the original files."

German authorities have several times asked for these files, which the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) has held since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 and the collapse of the East German regime.

The files are considered important because they contain the names of several thousand Stasi agents as well as secret reports on their activities, and could lead to the identification of former spies. The German government

"has had access to the files in the past an unidentified senior U.S. official told the Post. "But we have no plans to give them away."

"We will continue to be helpful" with Germans and other allied countries who wish to review the files, the official added. It remains a mystery how the CIA obtained the Stasi

files, and one official even declined to say what year they were obtained. That might help someone figure out where they came

from," he told the Post.

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Chinese sentenced in first Internet dissent case SHANGHAL, China (AP) him.

__ A Chinese software entrepreneur was convicted Wednesday of subversion and sentenced to two years in prison for giving e-mail addresses to dissidents abroad.

Lin Hai, 30, is the first convicted in China's effort to crush dissent in cyberspace even as it promotes the Internet for economic and educational

Lin was convicted of "inciting the subversion of state power," said a spokesman Shanghai Higher Level People's Court, who gave his name as Mr. Zhou. The crime is among China's most serious and is normally used against political dissidents.

In issuing the sentence, the three-judge panel with the Shanghai Intermediate People's Court said Lin deserved to be "punished harshly," according to a copy of the verdict obtained by Hong Kongbased Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in

China. The court also fined him 10,000 yuan (\$1,200) and ordered "the tools of his crime" confiscated: two desk-top computers, one laptop, a modem and telephone, the verdict said.

Lin's wife, Xu Hong, attended the sentencing but wasn't allowed to talk to her husband, and he did not speak either during the half-hour sentencing. She and other spectators were barred from his four-hour trial on Dec. 4.

This is the first time I've seen him since he was arrested" last March. Xu She said she would not know whether her husband would appeal until his lawyer had a chance to discuss the verdict with

"I will have to find out what Lin Hai thinks about the verdict," she said.

Lin. who owns a Shanghai software company, was arrested after he gave e-mail addresses of 30,000 Chinese computer users to "VIP Reference," a pro-democracy journal published on the Internet by Chinese dissidents in the United States.

China keeps close watch on the Internet. Special task forces have been set up to monitor the system. Service providers are required to register all users with the government and barriers have been installed to try to block sites deemed subversive or pornographie.

Nevertheless, the government has been unable to stop entirely the flow of pro-democracy materials sent into China by technically adept dissidents abroad.

Lin's case appears to be unrelated to a crackdown that began in November on pro-democracy activists trying to set up China's first opposition party. Three leaders of that group were sentenced last month to 11, 12 and 13 years in prison.

Robin Munro, a longtime observer of human rights in China, said Lin's short sentence could be meant to mute foreign criticism, while charging him with subversion — the worst offence in Chinese law - made it clear to Chinese that dissent on the Internet would not be tol-

achieved their They domestic hard-line message, but they also can say to foreign critics, 'See how lenient we were'," he said by telephone from Hong



Lin Hai, 30, a computer entrepreneur charged with subversion for supplying Chinese e-mail address to an Internet democracy magazine, is shown in this 1997 file photo

Kong, "Two years doesn't get Western congressmen and politicians in such a lather as 10 years would."

Lin had argued that he had no political motive and gave away the e-mail address in order to develop business contacts, his wife

Executives with China's rapidly growing Internet companies were rejuctant to speak about a legal case. But an expert at an elite government think-tank called the sentence appro-

"This was a matter of privacy," said Guo Liang of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing. He added that as a private businessman, Lin had no right to peddle email address without per-

mission from their owners. "Perhaps were good, but he doesn't have the right to violate

my privacy," Guo said. The publishers of "VIP Reference" issued a statement before Lin's sentenc-

ing calling the prosecution "landmark case of Internet persecution" and said the government was trying to intimidate its crit-

During Lin's trial in December, he was allowed lawyers in the closed

Seoul says N. Korea kidnap claim absurd

SEOUL (R) - North Korea said Wednesday a diplomat who went missing from its mission in Berlin was blackmailed and kidnapped by South Korean agents before being numed over to the United States.

Breaking the North's silence on the matter, the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored in Tokyo, demanded the United States return the diplomat immediate-

South Korea branded that "an absurd slander" and a police spokesman in Berlin said there was no reason to suspect foul

The German Foreign Ministry said Monday a diplomat had gone missing from the North Korean diplomatic mission in Berlin last weekend but could not confirm reports that he had asked for asylum in the United States.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that Kim-Kyong-Pil, 54, a second secretary in the economic department, and his wife Kim Kum-Sun, 52, were seeking asylum in the United States.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin told reporters in Washington Tuesday: "We don't comment on alleged asylum requests". Berlin police spokesman Hans-Joerg Draeger said the

North Korean mission in the

mar and his wife had gone missing. "We opened an investigation

city had reported that the diplo-

into their disappearance. The result was that we could find no grounds for suspicion that a crime had been committed," Dræger told Reuters.

"The man is an adult and has the freedom to move around as he likes. This is not a matter for the police," he said.

Draeger could not continu media reports that the couple were seeking asylum in the United States

South Korean newspapers have quoted official sources as saying Kim defected after being reprimanded at a meeting in Pyongyang of officials involved in commercial activi-

The reports said Kim may have decided to seek asylum fearing he would be punished. for not raising his quota of forcien currency.

Several North Korean diplomats have been arrested in various places around the world ondrug smuggling charges over the past two years. North Korean observers in

diplomats for smuggling and counterfeiting operations to raise desperately needed hard currency.

Seoul say the North uses its

The KCNA report, however,

computer were used to blackmail him into a meeting with South Korean agents, who kidnapped him from outside the Hilton Hotel in Berlin.

"Now that the U.S. still keeps our secretary abducted by (South Korean agents), we cannot but consider the U.S. to be an accomplice of the abduetion," the KCNA said, "It (United States) also will be held responsible entirely for all the consequences."

It was the latest salvo from North Korea as talks take place in Geneva to seek a peace agreement to end a state of war on the Korean peninsula that has existed for nearly a half century. The 1950-53 Korea was was halted by a now traving truce.

KCNA said South Korea's Agency for National Security Planning (NSP) intiffrated an agent into the European Headquarters of North Korea's National Alliance for reunification in the early 1990s.

North Korea, which does not have formal relations with Germany, has a mission attached to the Chinese embassy.

KCNA said the NSP agent 'systematically" stole computer files from Kim and tried To allure and kidnap" him by portrayed a plot in which files - using possession of the files as stolen from the diplomat's a threat.

Philippines sets date for first execution in years

MANILA (R) — A Philippine Judge set the date Wednesday for the country's first execution in over two decades but ordered prison officials not to divulge it to the condemned man until just hours before his execu-

Trial judge Thelma Ponferrada fixed the date — the second she had set for convicted child rapist Leo Echegaray in recent weeks — a day after the supreme court all but dashed his hopes of avoiding death by revers-

ing its previous order to stay the eve-

ट्यांश्य The supreme court ruling clearing the way for the execution provoked a sharp reaction from the international community and the country's Roman Catholic Church, which insists that capital punishment is inhuman and does not deter crime.

Cardinal Jaime Sin told reporters. The rest of the world is abolishing the death penalty and we, a Roman

Catholic country, are reintroducing

"This is a very sad step backwards for human rights in the Philippines, a country which has in many ways been at the forefront of human rights promotion in Asia" the London-based Amnesty International said in a statement faxed to Reuters.

filing a new appeal with the court this week to seek another reprieve for the 38-year-old house panner

China mounts 'atheist propaganda' drive in Tibet

Communist Party has launched a fresh "atheist propaganda" drive in Tibet in order to stamp out separatism and combat the devoutly Buddhist region's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, the Tibet Daily

BEUING (R) — China's paganda is an important measure in deepening the anti-separatist struggle, in firmly resisting the reactionary infiltration of the Dalai Lama clique and in making farmers and herders shed the negative influence of religion," the state-run newspaper quoted a senior

The atheism campaign would include education on science, practical skills and hygiene and would be propagated by all official media in Chinese-controlled Himalayan region, said the Tibet Daily in its Jan. 11 edi-

Earlier this month an

"The human rights situaseen in Beijing Wednesday.



Top model Adriana Karembeu sports a metallic short dress under a white cape designed by Paco Rabanne for his 1999 spring/summer haute couture collection presented in Paris (AP photo)

India-based human rights group issued a report saying China had stepped up repression of religion in Tibet, posing a serious threat to the remote region's centuries-old Buddhist cul-

tion in Tibet has continued to deteriorate over the last three years," said the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said in its annual survey on human rights in the Chinese-ruled region. issued on Jan. 11.

"Repression of religion. an intrinsic element in Tibetan culture, was intensified during 1998 through the 'patriotic re-education programme," said the centre, which is based in Dharamsala, India, home of the exiled Dalai Lama.

China held 1,083 Tibetan political prisoners at the end of 1998, of which 246 were women and 12 were below the age of 18, said the report, based on interviews with recent refugees.

The report also highlighted harsh taxation, increased ethnic Chinese migration and discriminatory policies that it said were creating a hostile economic environment for native residents in Tibet, which China brought under Communist rule in

Many analysts predict China will impose tight controls on the independenceminded region this year as China girds for the 40th anniversary in March of the abortive Tibetan uprising against Chinese rule that resulted in the Dalai Lama's exile to India.

China has denied the allegations of discrimination and political repression and detends its rule over Tibet. saying it has raised living standards and halted human rights abuses by a mediaeval theocracy which practised slavery until the 1950s.



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An independent Amb political dasis, published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975 بوردن تايمز يومية عربية سباسية مستقلة تصدر بالاسطيزية عن المؤسسة المسطية الاردسية

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Editorial and Advertising offices Jordan Press Foundation. University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311. 5699634. 5667171. 5603585

Facsimile: Editorial: 5696183. Advertising: 5693337

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo Web Site: http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Endorse the French initiative

AT A time when France is working on a plan to ease the sanctions imposed on Iraq, and the Arab foreign ministers are about to convene a meeting in Cairo to discuss also how to lift the crippling sanctions, Dennis Halliday, the former coordinator of the U.N. oil-for-food programme in Iraq, described the effects of the embargoes slammed on Baghdad ever since the Gulf crisis as sheer genocide. "I don't like the word genocide, but can you find a better word to describe this sort of catastrophe," Halliday said following his address to the French National Assembly Tuesday on his findings on Iraq.

There is no better person to gauge the dire effects of the sanctions slammed on Iraq than the former U.N. official who worked so close to the Iraqi scene and has been privy to the plight and suffering of the Iraqis for several years. It so happens that the judgement of the former international official on the implications of the sanctions regime on Iraq's people, especially children, corresponds well with the conclusions of the several international specialised agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, ILO and WHO, not to mention practically all the U.N. human rights bodies. That is why we believe the Arab World should be a party to the process of phasing out the punitive sanctions that hurt most of all the Iraqi people.

When the U.N. itself attests to the fact that no less than 40,000 Iragi adults and about 600,000 Iraqi children have lost their lives since 1990 due to the sanctions imposed on their country, who are we to challenge the extent of the "genocide" that the Iraqi people have been so savagely subjected to ever since the Gulf conflict. The least that the Arab foreign ministers can be expected to do is to endorse the French ideas and, if possible, improve on them. Surely the Arab countries are supposed to be in the forefront of the international community calling for an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people.

What the people of Iraq need is not only food and medicine but opportunities to develop their country economically and socially. It is now estimated that Baghdad would need no less than \$50-60 billion to finance its reconstruction. The Iraqi rights to development and economic progress must not be sacrificed for some dubious political aims. Now is the time to heed the counsel of the international experts and take them into serious consideration when the Iraqi file is put for a general review.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket gave thanks to God for the safe return and full recovery of His Majesty King Hussein. Saket added that these were the true feelings of one of the country's citizens who chose a stand and belonged to an opposing political approach for 30 years. These feelings express what is special about Jordan's experience with all its positives and negatives, achievements and failures, solidarity and differences, openness and closedness as well as kindness and harshness, said the writer. At the end, it is a distinguished experience, which leads to a strong belief in how healthy the country's constitutional, parliamentarian and democratic approaches are, he added. Jordan is currently facing one of its most critical and difficult stages, while the Arab Nation is living through one of the most dangerous periods since the beginning of this century. Jordanians of all classes are looking forward to reinforcing the country's unity in order to meet external and internal challenges and crises, which require reactivating the democratic march and removing the recent years' obstacles, said Saket, who added that citizens' gratitude, happiness and assurance are mixed with anticipation for the comprehensive changes, which were reported by the Arab and toreign media.

Al Arab Al Yawm's Nicola Nasser said normalisation with Arabs is a Jewish state goal, thus, all Israelis agree on it. However, Nasser added, in order to achieve normalisation, Palestinians have to begin, but their experience with the Israelis has been unsuccessful and cannot be considered a model for the Arabs. Shirnon Peres' announcement that he and the Labour Party will support the establishment of a Palestinian state by separating the two nations, is an indirect admission that the idea of normalisation has failed. Peres did not elaborate on how the separation could be achieved, and since a 50-year-old normalisation experience of Arab Israelis in the Jewish state has left one-third of Arab-Israelis homeless, this is not an encouraging model for Palestinians living outside Israel, said the writer.

HM King Hussein: An epitome of inspiration

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's safe return home Tuesday after an absence of six months during which he received medical treatment abroad has triggered much talk about the attributes that make him an asset to his people, the region, and the globe. Many lovers and admirers of the exceptional Monarch (whose number has increased dramatically over time) have said, and are saying, a great deal about him - and perceptively so. Over the years the King has come to mean so much to so many people (in the country. the region, and the world at large), not only because he has governed long, but also because he has, I would say, governed wisely. People have come to understand and appreciate his vision, his approach and his wisdom much more aptly now (now that enough time has elapsed) than at any other time before. Whether we like it or not truths - even the most basic and visible - at times

take time, ample time, to sink in. On His Majesty's 61st birthday. I wrote in this column about what I saw as the three fundamental characteristics of the Monarch's approach, the three pillars of his wisdom: common-sense, moderation and consistency. On the happy, auspi-cious occasion of His Majesty's return a couple of days ago, I wish to add one more characteristic of the King which has not received the attention it deserves: his optimism.

We live in a part of the world where many - among us and around us - think negatively. They, maliciously or ignorantly, keep criticising and complaining the whole time, unable to see the many positive things that are present in our lives, and the many positive things that have happened, are happening, and will be happening. They tell us that we are doing had (nav. miserably) not only economically but also politically, socially. and morally --- when careful observation and examination of things prove the opposite. Negative thinking, complaining, cynicism, scepticism, doubt, pessimism, tracic vision and doom have become second nature to many among

us. This is sad. It is indeed amazing - how shall I say it? - how automatic, how quick, how almost instinctive many are in their expression of negativity. They are much like a radio or a cassette recorder: the minute you switch it on, it begins airing complaints, criticism, unfounded rumours, tragic stories, etc.

It is so refreshing, so encouraging and so vital in the context of such unhealthy environment to hear from optimists, who - alas - are not as prevalent in our midst as one would want. Optimism is needed not only for psychological health and sanity but also for success. How can you feel good, how can you perform well, and how can you succeed, if people keep thinking negatively, if they keep putting you down, if they give up before they try, and if they keep predicting and expecting doom and failure?

His Maiesty is an optimist. Despite the many difficult circumstances the country and the region have been through for this past half century, he has kept his head high, and he has kept his smile. This is not a matter to be taken for granted. It takes an effort, a great effort for one to be cheerful and an optimist. It is easier (at times, even convenient) to complain. criticise, and preach pessimism. Unlike pessimism, optimism is not second nature. To be an optimist you have to repress the negative signals within your own psyche. To be an optimist, you have to transcend the negative environment around you. To be an optimist, you have to work and produce results that justify your optimism. The King does all of this, and more.

King Hussein's optimism is first. physiognomic and temperamental. It is well known to all that His Majesty, from his early boyhood until this very moment, has been an epitome of agility liveliness, physical fitness and athleticism. This in itself is important. Kings are like teachers (teachers are like kings, I should say) in this respect. Students love and admire agile, lively, physically fit and athletic teachers; subjects love and admire kings who enjoy such characteristics. For almost half a century now the King has been an inspiration through his agility, liveliness, physical fitness and

But much of the inspiration emanates. I would also say, from his Majesty's face. There is a great deal of magic in it: something that makes you feel safe, confident. secure and optimistic - and something that makes you feel good. Again, faces of leaders are like faces of teachers: depressing faces depress your inspiring faces inspire you. The King's face inspires.

While in the more advanced parts of this tiny globe many understand the importance of one's air, outlook and appearance, many in our part of the world do not. Your colleagues at work who are frowning, who have unfriendly

The view from Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

faces, who do not know how to smile, and who lack the basics of civility and cheerfulness probably do not know how uninspiring, upsetting and depressing to others their very sight, their very pres-

We come from a culture which emphasises cheerfulness and optimism. The Prophet Mohammad declared on more than one occasion: "A smile to a fellow human being is an act of worship." The King's face epitomises the Prophet's say-

But the king is an optimist also, secondly, in his anitude and approach. He himself, on more than one occasion, has criticised those who criticise negatively. those who put others down, those who preach the end of the world, those who speak of nothing but high water, volcanoes, earthquakes, doom and destruction (the millennialists, the apocalypsts, the extremists, the forces of darkness, and so

The King's optimism is not unfounded It is based on the belief that development progress, achievement and success take time. You have to plan first, you have to prioritise, and you have to proceed can tiously and meticulously. Such sound vision is reflected, internally, in the many five-year, ten-year development plans -which have done a lot of good for the country. Externally, it is reflected in his vision of peace in the region and in durable investments in relations with both Arab countries and countries of the globe. The King's vision in this respect counters and subverts the all-or-nothing attitude or approach which many pessimists among us preach, those who either want us to sit ann-tied until miracles materialise or those who want us to commit rash acts whose destructive results are all too-well-known.

The King's optimism stems from his patient, long-term outlook. Even though he is at times willing to take risks when the opportunity is to be seized, he has the discipline, the maturity, responsibility and vision to wait until the moment is rine. Short-term, fast-lane oppomnists much like bad salespersons who want to get as much profit from you the first time you pay them a visit, even if they have to cheat you, not even thinking of investing in a future relationship with you, are short-sighted failures. A good leader must be patient, must think of long-term

A good leader, and His Majesty King Hussein (may he live long and prosper) is, must be inspiring, cheerful and opimistic. This is vital.

Israeli elections and Palestinians

ELECTIONS WILL take place in Israel in the middle of next May. Eligible to vote in these elections is every Israeli citizen over the age of 18. One large group of people will not be allowed to participate in these elections. Palestinians living under the control of the state of Israel are not allowed this privilege.

For Palestinians the results of the Israeli elections affects them in two ways. The elected Israeli prime minister and parliament will have a direct effect on the lives of nearly 3 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank including East Jerusalem. Israel control the movements of Palestinians in these areas, the movement of goods and services in and out of these areas as well as controlling the skies above and the water below.

The Israeli elections also affect Palestinians in a different way. The party which will be elected will be charged with completing the interim as well as the permanent status talks with Palestinians. As important as this election is to their future, Palestinians are paralysed; not able to effect the results in any concrete way.

Not only are Palestinians not allowed to vote for the next Israeli prime minister, but the actions of even a tiny minority of Palestinians could adversely affect which direction these elections will go. In the last elections, multiple suicide bombings are said to have resulted in the defeat of dovish Labour Party leader Shimon Peres and the election of hard-liner Likud leader Netanyahu. Ironically, any new attacks will also help Netanyahu even though he is now the incumbent. In fact it is expected that any Palestinian-Israeli confrontation will help right wing candidates whose slogan call for a tougher policy towards Palestinians.

Even Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat feels trapped in these pivotal elections that in a way will deter-

mine his own political future and that of his life long dream of establishing a Palestinian state. Arafat's support to any peace party will be a kiss of death to that party.

So what should Palestinians do regarding an election that they are quite properly concerned about. While publicly stating that they don't want to interfere in internal Israeli politics there is no doubt that Palestinians want the peace camp to win. The experience of the past two years with the right wing Israeli government has produced nothing but disappointment after disappointment. Agreements are not honoured and the goodwill that prevailed during the Rabin/Peres era nas evaporated.

But aside from the problems of violence, the issue of declaring a Palestinian state looms as the largest dilemma facing the Palestinian leadership. Ever since the Oslo agreement was signed. Yasser Arafat has been telling his people that Oslo is a transitional agreement that will lead to statehood. In the agreement a time ceiling was placed to guarantee that the interim phase will not turn into a permanent one. The Oslo signatories agreed that negotiations for the permanent status of the Palestinian areas begin after the third year of the interim agreement and end no later than the fifth year. After a short ceremonial opening in the last days of the Shimon Peres government, these talks have been held up by the lack of progress on key issues in the interim agreement.

Yasser Arafat is under two conflicting pressures. He is expected to fulfil his own pledge by declaring a state on May 4, 1999 irrespective of what it will do to the Israeli elections. Arafat would loose a lot of public support from his own Fateh movement as well as from the general Palestinian public if he doesn't carry out the promise he made to Palestinians. Proponents of this idea dismiss the fact that this will Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttab

effect the result of the Israeli elections by helping out the hard-liners in Israel. Among many Palestinians there is little difference between Labour and Likud. They cite the fact that Likud Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon and Likud Knesset leader Meir Shitreet have said publicly that they expect an eventual Palestinian state. For these Palestinians, in the Middle East fact are made on the ground and even negotiated agreements are only the results of movements by the Palestinian people on the

On the other hand friendly Arab and foreign countries are pressuring the Palestinian leader to postpone his announcement for say six months. Egypt, Europe and the U.S. are said to be pushing for a delay in declaring statehood, otherwise they fear (although they would never state so publicly) Netanyahu will be reelected.

No matter how the issue of statehood will be handled. Israeli voters will once again determine the leadership of their own government which has control directly or indirectly over the lives of another people. As Israelis elect their government for the 21st century let us hope that this apartheid-like situation will go away quickly making way for two freely elected states living side by side.

LETTERS

Best wishes to HM

To the editor:

ON BEHALF of all Jordanian students studying in the U.K. and abroad. I would like to thank God on the safe return home of His Majesty King Hussien, after successful treatment for cancer in the United States.

We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Jordanian family on the safe return home of our beloved leader, and we ask God to keep him in good health and to give him the strength to keep on ruling the great nation of Jordan.

Watching His Majesty bring his aircraft to a standstill on his soil brought tears to all our eyes, and regrets in our hearts, that we could not have been with the Jordanian family to celebrate this most happy

Welcome home 'Sayedna'! and may God Bless you.

University of London. King's College London.

To the editor:

I WOULD like to offer my sincere greetings to His Majesty King

Hussein and the people of Jordan on the occasion of 'Eid Al Fitr. As a long-time visitor to your country, with many Jordanian friends and associates. I have great feelings of affection towards it. I am able to share a little in the obvious joy at King Hussein's return. You are blessed with a remarkable Monarch, a true statesman of whose ilk there are sadly too few in this age. I wish him and the Royal family well.

> G. Haigh growler1@pacific.net.ph

To the editor:

I WOULD like to use your esteemed newspaper in order to welcome His Majesty back to his Kingdom and his people.

As you know, many Israelis were concerned and have sent their best wishes to His Majesty during his illness.

We are very happy that His Majesty is well and back in his country and we all hope that he will continue to be a catalyst of the peace process in the region which is so needed for us all,

I hope that His Majesty will come to visit us in the near future. May God grant His Majesty long years of health and prosperity.

Yossi Fischer

Pollard could still muddy the waters

By George S. Hishmeh

WASHINGTON — America's most notorious spy, Jonathan Jay Pollard, who passed on to Israel a roomful of classified data and photos of the Palestine Liberation Organisation headquarters in Tunis and Iraqi chemical factories, could still muddy the waters for the impeached U.S. president, Bill Clinton, and the Israeli prime minister, Benyamin Netanyahu, now locked in a fierce fight for his political

The Israeli leader took to task this week his Labour Party challenger, Ehud Barak, for refusing to sign a joint appeal to Clinton to free the convicted spy, who became an Israeli citizen while serving a life-without-parole sentence. The Netanyahu ploy was dismissed in Israel as an attempt to gain credit should Pollard be released before the national elections on May

President Clinton, hungry for a big foreign policy triumph, had promised Netanyahu to undertake his third review of Pollard's conviction because the Israeli leader threatened to scuttle the U.S.-brokered Wye accord with the Palestinians. Clinton was expected to reveal his decision shortly after the

January 11 deadline when his senior national security advisers were to make their own recommendations.

Now the president has inexplicably opted to delay his decision probably until the Senate impeachment proceedings are over for the obvious reason that he would not want to anger the Senators who will be voting on whether to remove him from office. (Actually about 60 Senators, including all the members of the intelligence committee, have written him asking not to commute the sentence.)

On the other hand, Clinton could anger the powerful American Jewish community, which usually supports the Democratic Party should be not yield on Pollard. Several prominent Jewish leaders are still agitating for the release of the man some have called "the Jewish Dreyfus," the French Jewish army officer who was convicted of treason but later exonerated when proved to be a victim of anti-Semitism. They will be meeting Attorney General Janet Reno, who still has to submit her

recommendation to the White House. Clinton's decision to delay his response has angered many who believe, as one prominent columnist put it, he "will make one of his peculiar 'deals' over Pollard, in particular one in

which Pollard's life sentence would be intelligence officials who are detercommuted and he would be released in 2002." Georgie Anne Geyer added in her syndicated column: "The fact that that will be after Bill Clinton leaves office would provide him with his usual mix of innocence and deniabili-

The president's most persistent critic in this matter is Joseph DiGenova, the prosecutor who sent Pollard to jail. He recently told the Centre for Policy Analysis on Palestine here that it was his belief that Clinton "has already decided that he's going to release Mr. Pollard and I think what he's doing now is, he's trying to figure out how to have sex, without having sex, basical-

DiGenova elaborated: "What he's trying to do is try to figure out how to release Mr. Pollard in the least offensive way, at the least offensive moment.

He warned that Pollard remains "a continuing threat" to U.S. national security because all of the documents that still are there, "10 feet by 10 feet by 6 feet, can be interpreted by Mr. Pollard as soon as he gets on the ground."

The battle royale has lately seen countless leaks annibuted to several

mined that Pollard remain behind bars. Many blame Clinton for this mess. DiGenova asserted: "There is no doubt in my mind that the president sent signals to Mr. Netanyahu which he interpreted — this is what we call 'Clinton signals: anyone who has ever been in a meeting with him I'm sure knows the way the President, a very delightful man in many ways, obviously can communicate when he wants to ... I'm quite sure Mr. Netanyahu was not dreaming when he had discussions with Mr. Clinton and I'm quite certain that Mr. Clinton purposely led him to believe, erroneously, that Mr. Pollard

was going to be released." Robert Novak, another prominent columnist, maintained in his syndicated column, that "it was Clinton - not Netanyahu who raised the prospect of a trade - Pollard in return for a partial Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank" again through his "winking and nodding at the right moment to make people think" what he wants them to

But the most devastating account of Israel's espionage appeared this week in The New Yorker. It was written by the respected investigative journalist Seymour Hersh under the blunt title.

Clinton's mind-set during those Wye Plantation days and nights last October cajoling the Palestinians and Israelis was provided in Hersh's concluding paragraph. When Clinton was told that the release of Pollard would infuriate the intelligence community, the president replied to the unidentified intelligence officer, "Nah, don't worry about it. It'll blow over."

Besides the then threatened resignation of George Tenet, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, should Pollard return with Netanyahu 35 demanded by the Israeli, the honourable stand last week of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in telling the president that there are "no compelling foreign policy considerations" to justify releasing Pollard maybe the knockout punch she was savouring after he unsuccessful bout with the Israeli prime minister in London when six tried to convince Israel to drop its

intransigence. Moreover, Netanyahu can start practising charity at home and show Jenien cy to a more deserved prisoner of conscience. Mordechai Vanunu, who remains in solitary confinement is Israel for telling a London newspare and and on Los Angeles, about Israel's nuclear arsenal.

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By P.H. Fe Tre Anadeigt WITH AFRICAN e

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HE WALKED into the main square by

the National Museum, poured petrol

on himself and lit a match. As the

flames tore through his clothes and

began to sear his flesh, the 20-year-old

student could not have anticipated the

massive effect his action would have.

What might have been written off as a

fuule gesture became a defining sym-

bol for a generation. Jan Palach's self-

immolation in Prague's Wenceslas

Square was arguably the most dramat-

His death, 30 years ago yesterday.

brought hundreds of thousands of peo-

ple into the streets. A quiet student of

philosophy with no history of political

activism, Palach burned himself alive

five months after Soviet tanks had

rolled into Czechoslovakia to end a

But the main target of Palach's dra-

matic protest was not the Kremlin. He

was upset by the way his compatriots

seemed to have accepted the occupa-

tion without resistance. After the

euphoria of 1968, people had become

depressed and beaten down. Palach

wanted to shake them up,' says Zuzana

Bluh, who as a student leader helped

His act was modelled on public self-

immolations by Buddhist monks in

Saigon protesting at the Vietnam war.

It was later copied by a wave of Indi-

an students who set themselves alight

in 1990 in protest at changes in quota

systems for entry into university and

the civil service. In Britain in 1993.

Graham Bamford, a 48-year-old for-

mer haulage contractor, burned him-

self to death outside the House of

Commons to protest at the horrors of

ic suicide of the 20th century.

swelling reform movement.

to organise his funeral.

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west of Los Angeles, was scheduled for

Bosnia. Three years ago an Italian homosexual set himself alight on the steps of St. Peter's to denounce discrimination against gays.

None of those other suicides had the impact of Palach's. So what is it that makes one self-immolation catch the imagination while others do not? It is certainly the starkest form of suicide. Hunger strikes are often used as a form of escalating pressure by protesters, because their effect is slow and reversible. Suicide bombings are the ultimate political act, but as they are designed to inflict pain on others they carry different moral overtones.

Self-immolation is violent and nonviolent at the same time. But what really distinguishes it is that it is one of the most painful ways to die. Palach was in exeruciating agony for three days before he succumbed to his 85 per cent burns.

His act was powerful because 'it struck a raw nerve when society was going into a kind of oblivion about our situation, says Zdenka Gabalova, who is now a counsellor at the Czech embassy in London. In the note he carried. Palach wrote that he wanted To wake the people of our country up." In the immediate aftermath of the invasion, workers at several Prague factories went on strike. The Communist Party which had led the reform process known as the Prague Spring denounced the Russians even while Alexander Dubcek and the other leaders were taken to Moscow. But when they came back after signing the socalled Moscow Protocols, which attempted to legalise the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia, most

people began to give up. Palach wanted to reverse this pes-

simistic trend. He wrote an explicitly political note, calling for an immediate end to censorship and the banning of a Soviet propaganda sheet called Zpravy. He also implied that he was part of a group of volunteers ready to kill themselves in sequence if their demands were not fulfilled. Ominously, he signed his suicide note 'Torch

Number One:

It was a fantasy, as Zuzana Bluh recalls. One of her student union colleagues talked to Palach as he lay dying. 'He said he acted on his own. There was no group. But he insisted he had no regrets about his action, and didn't want anyone else to follow his example.' While he lay in hospital, negotiations started between the students and the government. Once Palach died, they narrowed down to the terms of his funeral. For several days his body lay in state in the hall of Charles University, placed deliberately near the statue of the religious reformer Jan Hus, burned at the stake in 1415 for asking for the Bible to be read in church in Czech. Meanwhile. thousands of Czechs kept vigil at the spot where Palach set himself alight. On the day of the funeral, half a million people took to the streets in by farthe biggest demonstration since the Soviet invasion.

It was very different from the reaction to the self-immolation by Buddhist monks in Vietnam in 1963. The first suicide was caught on film and the shocking picture of the human pyre became as famous an image as the photograph of the little girl running down a road after an American napalm attack. But the suicides led to no action. 'They failed. They were seeking to break the impasse in Viet-

nam, but were denounced by both sides,' says the Buddhist historian Stephen Batchelor.

The ultimate political protest

Their self-immolation was criticised by people who supported the anti-war movement, such as Martin Luther King. Thich Nhat Hanh, a senior Buddhist mank who was close to those who set themselves alight, said in a letter to king that their suicides were neither acts of despair nor political protest. They were aimed at 'moving the hearts of the oppressors and calling the attention of the world to the suffering of the Vietnamese... To say something while experiencing this kind of pain is to say it with the utmost sincerity,' Although Buddha was against self-mortification, various forms of self-immolation have been practised over the centuries in the Mahayana school of Buddhism, says Batchelor. This wasn't a one-off nontraditional reaction to an extreme situ-

That could hardly be said of Graham Bamford's 1993 suicide by fire at Westminster, Although unique in our recent history, hardly any British newspapers covered it in-depth, As-Bamford was known to be depressed over the failure of his marriage, the political aspect was played down. But in a letter offering his services to an aid agency shortly before his death. Bainford wrote that 'a photograph in the newspaper of a distressed little Balkan girl about the age of my own daughter galvanised me into action." A few days later he wrote a final message: The British army must not be a guard of honour at a mass funeral. Bosnian babies, children, and womenfolk are waiting for the politicians to do what they know they should --

'What really distinguishes [selfimmolation] is that it is one of the most painful ways to die. Palach was in excruciating agony for three days before he

give them military protection. No British television producers left the death was worthy of interest, and it was left to a Croat. Nenad Puhovski, to produce a film on Bamford which mirrored his own concerns about publie apathy towards the horrors going on in the Balkans.

succumbed...'

Psychiatrists have had little chance to study self-immolators. One of the few who has is Dr. Swaran Singh, now at Nottingham University Hospital, who looked at what he calls the faltruistic suicides' of 22 young people, 12 male and 10 female, in India in 1990. Nine set themselves alight and the others took poison, in protest at the government's decision to enlarge the quotas for low-caste people in universities and public service jobs. They were interviewed within two days of their

action. Six of them later died.

Dr. Singh and his colleagues found that, apart from one man, the young people had no manifest psychiatric disorders. They also contrasted with young people who commit suicide for non-political reasons. These suicides usually have a "strong external locus of control,' meaning that they believe in outside forces such as luck, fate and chance. Seventeen of the 21 had high aspirations and ambitions.

A similar analysis may have fitted Jan Palach. He had no history of depression, fronically, his death had a kind of therapeutic effect on Crech society. For a few days the post-invasion trauma was lifted, as people poured into the streets in a collective act of solidarity echoing the demonstrations of the Prague Spring. His action seemed to have given them back a sense of dignity and honour.

When I visited his grave in Prague's municipal cemetery of Olsany on an ordinary weekday more than a year after his death, there were still hundreds of flickering candles. Every few minutes someone new came to lay flowers. So popular was the shrine that in 1973 the secret police exhumed Palach's remains and cremated them. His family had no idea where the ashes were until they were handed over in 1974 for burial in his local town. But, in a typically low-key Czech act of silent defiance, people continued to treat the empty grave in Olsany as a shrine. The piles of flowers were constantly renewed, even though Ian Palach's body had long

- The Guardian

Lucifer is part of the programme in paradise

By Andrew Smith

THE HISTORICAL lesson of Sod's Law seems to suggest that the more powerful the wge to social and political utopia, the more appalling the dystopia that follows. Is this inevitable? One of the best opportunities to start afresh since Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden has just occurred and gone largely unnoticed. What can this experi-

ment tell us? The attempt to create an ideal society from scratch began as a computer game. Pavel Curtis, a Xerox researcher, working in the basement of a nondescript building in Palo Alto, California, invented a virtual world called LambdaMOO. He was curious about whether the Internet could provide the environment in which people could come together, enjoy each other's company and coexist with a harmony lacking in the physical world.

He created a mansion with ample grounds, which visitors could access via the Internet. There, they could chat with other guests and eventually put down roots. find their own space and build whatever their time and programming skills would allow. It was a tranquil, cerebral place. where the standard of conversation was

high and decorum rigorously observed. To the virtual citizens of this hallowed society, it was more than an Internet game. A common complaint levelled at computer games is that their designers fail to programme a moral imperative into the action. but as God will tell you, moral imperatives

are hard to programme from scratch. This world, on the other hand, acquired a moral dimension organically, through participants forming relationships. You could be whoever you wanted — a philosopher.

an artist, even a space alien.

ers may have looked pretty odd. They communicated with each other in arcane and stilted language and often gave themselves false names, but as one participant put it: "Just because people aren't using their real names, it doesn't mean they don't have reputations to protect."

As word of this utopia spread, however, and the virtual world attracted new citizenplayers, hell turned out to be other people.

There had always been squabbles and complaints, of course, and it may have been the minor but time-consuming business of dealing with these, as much as any idealism, that led Curtis to set his utopia free. As founder and chief programmer, Aka Haakon the archwizard, he had always had the final say in disputes and matters of policy. Now he announced the "New Direction." a change in the ground rules under which government would be ceded to the citizens. If they voted in referenda for certain changes, he would follow their wishes, he declared. A few anarchists scoffed at having democracy forced upon them by dictate, but most of their fellows were

For a while, the new regime appeared to alter nothing at all. But one evening, in the convivial surrounds of the living room, an eccentric character who called himself Mr. Bungle went on the rampage, committing the society's first notable crime: the "virtual rape" of three women. Bungle had also written a special "voodoo doll" programme, which enabled him to put words into the mouths of other players and force them to have sex together.

The real life equivalent of all this is perhaps the obscene phone call rather than physical rape, but the players assaulted in this previously civilised place were offended and upset. Something had to be done, not only about Mr. Bungle, but about mak-

'As word of this utopia spread... and the virtual world attracted new citizen-players, hell turned out to be other people'

ing sure no such outrage could be perpetrated again.

The obvious solution would have been to "toad" Mr. Bungle — a term which betrayed the society's origins in online games such as Dungeons and Dragons (where miscreants could be turned into toads for specified periods). In this case, however, the idea was to eject Mr. Bungle permanently from the game. Only Haakon and members of the wizard class (the programming overseers) were originally entitled to use the Ctoud command, but. according to the New Direction, it had to be by popular consent. The debate over Mr. Bungle's future thus became a discussion of online democracy and the best means of implementing consensus and regulating society. So, thanks to the transgressions of one player, who later turned out to be controlled by the residents of a fraternity house at New York University - the fun had

begun (or ended, said the anarchists). Bungle was duly expelled, but by the close of the affair. LambdaMOO had acquired formal arenas for debate, an elected judiciary and elaborate voting procedures, with the wizard class agreeing to be bound by the players' decisions. A sizeable

portion of the domain's 7,000-odd populace took their governance seriously. As time and crises passed, though, the utopia came to look more and more like the everyday, corporeal world. Out of the distinction now drawn between wizards, appointed or elected officials and the ordinary citizenry grew a class system.

There was revolts against this and the distribution of scarce resources thard disk space, the virtual society's equivalent of land), followed by calls for troublemakers to be "toaded." Some members of what became disparagingly known as the "Power Elite" broke away to form rebel societies of their own, while a character known as Finn successfully established a new class of sexually active player called Schmoos, incurring the wrath of the establishment and ini-

tiating the Schmoo wars. Later still, there was a plan to turn the strictly rationed space on the computer's hard drive into currency. Citizens faced the prospect of having to pay for services, learn marketable skills (the oldest profession being one of the most likely) and deal with a monetary system.

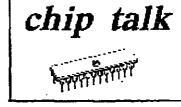
Now Julian Dibbell, a former player, has set all this down in an entertaining book. My Tiny Lie: Crime and Passion in Virtual World. Dibbell writes intelligently of the complications caused by free speech ("this weird liberal religion in America") and the relationship between technological progress, power and morality.

What have we learnt from LambdaMOO and other virtual communities which have followed a similar pattern? Probably less about our inability to get on than about the hubris and narcissism behind our desperate drive to fix things once and for all. Utopia?

- The Sunday Times

Your next PC WITH EVERY new

year PC aficionados start dreaming of the ultimate PC that year may bring. Although they know that there is nothing such an "ultimate" machine and that long-term forecasts are virtually impossible, they still



By Jean-Claude Elias

have enough elements to build, even if in their imagination only for the time being, the personal computer they'll be using in say four or five years.

Let's first settle an old account with the much-debated Windows operating system. It seems reasonable to think that the apcoming Windows 2000 will be very close to what we needed in the first place, when the "pre-historic" version 3.1 was launched in the mid-eighties - a system that has power, true user-friendliness, practiculity, and above all, reliability. In spite of all the criticism the subsequent releases have received, each of them was a major, positive step forward. The current Windows 98 has indeed fixed some of the difficulties we have encountered with Windows 95. Windows 2000 is expected to be officially released before the end of this year.

On the hardware front things are a little bit more crowded, but not less promising. The advent of the DVD player - slowly replacing the CD-ROM drive - may constitute the most drastic change. The super floppy disk designed by Mitsubishi Electric can store 120MB of data, is about five times faster than the traditional 1.4MB drive, and is fully read/write compatible with it. Hard disk storage seems a problem of the past. The new drives offer an average of SGB (billion bytes or characters) and by 2004, the standard capacity should be in the range of 30GB. In human terms this means that you can keep entire collections of music and high-resolution digital photographs, permanently on your hard disk, in addition of course, to more traditional types of files like word processing documents, accounts, data bases of names, numbers, etc.

What now takes several minutes to download on the Internet will take just a few seconds in three or four years. Which means that playing stereo, hi-fi music and full-screen, high-quality video, directly on-line — without having to previously download and store the files on hard disk — will be possible.

Digital cameras constitute the fastest growing market of computer peripherals. Whether still cameras or camcorders, both have been tremendously improved in the last two years and the price of professional models is slowly becoming affordable to the masses. Actually there seems to be a convergence of both types, and manufacturers like Sony, IVC and Canon expect to produce cameras that do both stills and video at the same time. with equal quality. Most analysts agree that "the days of the traditional film are numbered." Processing, viewing, printing your best shots and productions directly on computer is a priceless advantage. The progress of colour printers has a lot to do with it. From a slow 8 minutes for an A4 colour page, ink-jet printers are now capable of four times this throughput, and probably another 4 or even 8 times the speed by 2004. How many of us will still go to the lab?

The smooth and fast integration of Internet, sound and image. with personal computers, all done with the highest quality and at the highest speeds can only means one thing — if there are still a few people left who can do without a PC today, how many will there still be five years from now?

Viewed from the world outside, the play-Martian landscape tied to volcanic activity

By Jeff Donn **Associated Press**

UNDERGROUND VOLCANIC action on ancient Mars sculpted gorges far larger than the U.S. Grand Canyon and melted enough water to feed floods of biblical pro-

portions, two geologists theorise. Most scientists have attributed Mars gorges to the bowing and stretching of the lerrain from surface forces. Under the new theory, such features were instead shaped from below by rising wedges of molten tock known as dikes.

Under the new theory, the dikes would have also melted vast quantities of ice. This would explain the colossal floods that scientists generally believe scoured Mars 2-3 billion years ago. The theory, which appears Thursday in the journal Nature, was devised by geologists Dan McKenzie and Francis Nimmo at the University of

Cambridge in England. Under their scenario, dikes pushed up to within several miles of the surface, forcing the rock above to jut upward and outward. The area in the middle sugged, forming a canyon. Meanwhile, the molten rock melted ice in the frozen ground; underground pools formed and spread, and the rock above — as if affoat — shifted into the bro-

ken, chaotic pattern characteristic of Mars. The water trapped underground could have offered the sort of warm, moist oases where some have suggested that life could have survived. When the water ultimately found its way to the surface, it collected in the canyons. The two geologists calculated that such a process could have let loose

floods of a quadrillion litres or more. McKenzie argued that a gigantic dike larger than any on Earth, or a series of smaller ones, could run beneath the canyon network known as the Valles Marineris, the planet's best-known landmark.

The Valles Marineris stretches about 4,000 kilometres and runs as deep as 10 kilometres, its walls tower more than five times higher than the Grand Canyon's. Alfred McEwen, a geologist at the Uni-

versity of Arizona, challenged the molten dike theory as the explanation for Mars' canyons. He said there is scant evidence that there was full-scale volcanic activity. such as volcanoes or lava flow, at the time the gorges took shape.

South Africa, Denmark space hopes go up

By P.H. Ferguson The Associated Press

SOUTH AFRICAN educators hope a satellite launch will inspire schoolchildren to take up science and math, and Denmark wants it to answer questions about how the Earth interacts with the

A successful launch of a Delta II rocket early Friday would put the first satelme from each country into orbit. Lift-off from Vandenberg Air Force Base, north-

0758 GMT a \$217 million, 3-tonne when NASA engineers at a conference satellite named ARGOS was NASA's primary payload on the mission. It was programmed to enter orbit 58 minutes, 20 seconds after lift-off.

South Africa's Sunsat and Denmark's Orsted satellites - each weighing only 120 pounds and about the size of a refrigerator - hitched a ride on the rocket for free, in exchange for the data they collect. They were programmed to be released into their own orbital paths 41 minutes, 40 seconds after ARGOS. South Africa's journey to space began

met students and teachers building a satellite at the University of Stellenbosch, near Cape Town. The school was not sure how it would get the satellite up. but knocked on NASA's door for several years after the 1991 meeting in hopes the satellite could be placed in spare cargo space on a U.S. launch vehicle.

"Sunsat exists because of NASA," said Garth Milne, head of the South Africa project. "We would not have been able to afford our own launcher. At one point we were thinking we would have to

close down the programme." NASA had room on this rocket and offered the satellite a lift into space in exchange for permission to plant a global positioning system receiver aboard. Sunsat will conduct remote-sensing experiments on low-cost image production from space. It was built by graduate students for

about \$1.8 million. South Africans say a more important goal of their microsatellite is to inspire underprivileged African schoolchildren to take on math and science.

Through the satellite programme,

teachers distributed basic electronic kits to 40,000 children in disadvantaged schools. The kits help the students including those who don't have electricity at home -- learn the basics of electricity and how it can run a telephone or satellite.

"It is a small step, but we want to show... kids from disadvantaged communities that they can conquer larger steps," said Amold Schoonwinkel of the University of Stellenbosch, "We want to use this as a recipe to train far more engineers and scientists." Orsted is a simple. compact satellite with only a few instruments and took only a relatively short time to build, said project director Jens Langeland-Knudsen. Its mission is to survey the Earth's magnetic fields and electrical properties. The results are expected to help scien-

tists understand more about the interaction between the Earth and the sun.

"It's a giant step for Danish space research." Langeland-Knudsen said.

ARGOS, the Air Force's largest research satellite, has more than 30 research objectives. Among them are sensor technology for possible use in the international space station, superconductivity and measuring dust and debris in crowded space orbits.

Lift-off was delayed several times earlier in the week to allow launch teams to retest equipment and review emergency procedures.

Greenspan sees risks to strong U.S. economy

Federal Reserve (Fed) Chairman Alan Greenspan said Wednesday turmoil abroad and falling exports posed risks to the "sparkling" U.S. economy. and suggested he was in no rush to cut interest rates.

Testifying before the U.S. House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, Greenspan sounded a cautious note on the nearrecord level of U.S. stock prices, which he said may be difficult to sustain because of weaker corporate profits.

"While there are risks going forward, to date domestic demand and hence employment and output in the United States certainly has remained vigorous." he said in his first testimony of the year. "Though the pace of ecohomic expansion is widely expected to moderate as 1999 unfolds, signs of an appreciable slowdown as yet remain scant.

Greenspan kept his traditionally tight-lipped stance on the direction of U.S. interest rates by not commenting directly on the level of borrowing costs.

But economists and interpreted his traders statements on the U.S. economy and the risks it faced as broadly balanced. suggesting the U.S. central bank was in no hurry to change interest rates soon after three reductions last

"At first glance it seems there's not going to be a rate hike or rate cut," said Teis Knuthsen, chief strategist at SEB Merchant Banking. "This confirms the Fed is in neutral mode," he said, referring to the Fed's policy stance.

Reviewing recent developments in financial markets. Greenspan said they had reacted well to events in Brazil, which last week devalued its real currency in response to mounting investor pressure.

He said sustained reforms by the Brazilian governwhose pension reform plans faced a key vote later on Wednesday, was crucial to avoid a spreading of the crisis in the region and bolster investor confidence.

Reinforcing for financial markets his wait-and-see approach on interest rates, Greenspan said the Fed would need to continue scrutinising developments closely on the world's capital markets.

"In light of the importance of financial markets in the economy, and of the volatility and vulnerability in financial asset prices more generally, policymakers must continue to pay particular attention to these markets." he said.

Greenspan's comments on the vulnerability of stock prices to a downturn weakened prices only temporarily. The bigger impact was in the bond market. where his remarks were seen as ruling out a rate cut in the near future. The 30year U.S. Treasury bond lost a point in value around the U.S. midday.

"The bottom line is he's very clearly telling us the Fed is not interested in cutting rates right now." said Christopher Low, chief economist at First Tennessee Capital Markets. "We all knew that, but maybe we're not used to

testimony. Greenspan emphasised that the central bank does not use its interest rate policy to target specific levels in the stock market.

him spelling it out so clear-

Raising the possibility that recent gains in stock prices may be difficult to sustain, he said: "The level of equity prices would appear to envision substantially greater growth of profits than has been experienced of late."

"But, while asset values are very important to the economy and so must be carefully monitored and assessed by the Federal Reserve, they are not themselves a target of monetary policy," he said.

While saying the performance to date of the U.S. economy had been impressive, Greenspan said this achievement should not be taken for granted.

"To assess the economic outlook properly, we need to reach beyond the mere description of America's sparkling economic performance of eight years of record peacetime expansion to seek a deeper understanding of the forces that have produced it." he

Iranian parliament approves petrol price rise

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran's parliament has approved a 75 per cent increase next year in domestic petrol prices, but the hike is considerably less than the 275 per cent increase demanded by the government, the official news agency IRNA reported Wednesday.

The price rise is part of the government's strict austerity budget for the Iranian year beginning March 21, which aims to cut spending in the wake of falling oil prices that have slashed government rev-

The government has especially targetted petrol subsidies that make Iranian petrol among the cheapest in the world. Iranian consumers pay a fraction of the cost price of petrol, estimated here to be about 900 riyals (30 cents) a

The result is that Iran. the second largest oil producer in the Middle East, is forced to import an annual \$300 million worth of oil products to satisfy domestic consumption.

IRNA said Wednesday that rock-bottom fuel prices have also led to thriving and illegal exports of fuel in Iran's border regions.

Profit margins are considerable, with petrol costing 22 times as much in Turkey, 13 times in Pakistan and 10 times as much in the oil-producing United Arab Emirates, according to IRNA.

OECD: Danish krone at risk from post-euro monetary turbulence

PARIS (AFP) — The Danish krone could be more exposed to foreign exchange market turbulence because it is not in the euro zone, and Denmark should reform its economy further to minimise this risk, the OECD has said.

Denmark's decision not to join the European Union (EU) single currency "may allow the krone to be used for diversification in international portfolios," the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said in a

country report on Denmark. But the krone "may also be more exposed during turbulence in foreignexchange markets" because of the Danish government's commitment to peg its currency to the euro within a narrow fluctuation band of 2.25 per cent the report

This exposure 'will be minimised if finances continue to be in solid surplus and structural reforms are forthcoming. the OECD said.

The report did not give any forecast on whether Denmark was likely to join the currency in future. although the latest opinion poll released last week showed 52 per cent of Danes would vote yes now. after a 1993 referendum rejected the single currency.

Denmark has ensured the "credibility" of the krone in its successful operation of a peg to the German mark in the run-up to the euro launch, and by respecting the economic criteria for joining the currency even though it decided not to do

so, the report said. But it noted that "a fixed exchange rate regime has to operate through a long-term disciplining effect on price and wage formation and fiscal policies."

"Fiscal consolidation, monetary policy credibility and the structural reform programme have together been highly successful in creating the conditions for long-term growth." the report said.

But while Denmark had done much to restructure its economy and make its labour market more flexible. "the impact on structural unemployment would be greater" if the government acted to increase the gap between state benefits for those out of work and

It also said that more

needed to be done to increase competitiveness in the economy, for example in the energy sector which remains "deeply entrenched in heavy regulations" and where "a recent opening of the market can only be seen as a minimum solution to comply with requirements set by the EU.

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The OECD made no revi sion to its forecasts for the Danish economy contained in its six-monthly Economic Outlook in December predicting 2.0 per cent growth in 1999 and 1.9 per cent in 2000, down from 2.4 per cent in 1998.

It forecast unemployment to fall to 6.0 per cent this vear and 5.9 in 2000 from 6.5 per cent in 1998, with consumer price inflation at just below two per cent throughout the period.

Algeria sees higher gas revenues in '99

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian Finance Minister Abdulkrim Harchaoui said this week that a projected 1S per cent rise in gas exports in 1999 will offset declining oil revenues.

He also said that the government would honour its foreign obligations and has earmarked a bigger amount in its 1999 budget to settle its foreign debts estimated at \$31 billion.

"There has been a substantial increase in gas exports which will reach 18 per cent in 1999 through two new pipelines that have been opened recently --- one to Italy and the other to Spain through Morocco," Harchaoui told Reuters in an interview. Harchaoui said the government expected total oil and gas

revenues to reach \$11.6 billion in 1999. Energy revenues are Algeria's economic mainstay.

accounting for 95 per cent of its total exports and 60 per cent of state budget income. A world oil price slump has forced the North African coun-

try to twice lower its energy revenue forecasts from \$12.5 billion in early 1998 to \$11.2 billion in June and \$10.2 billion in December.

The average oil price for 1998 stood at around \$13.8 a barrel compared with the pre-

viously budgeted price of \$15 a barrel. Harchaoui said. "We still believe that the

average price for 1999 will be \$15 and that the present drop will not remain forever." But the minister said crude

oil constituted only a third of Algeria's total energy exports, while gas - both natural and liquefied — plus condensates accounted for two-thirds.

The drop in world oil prices has directly affected our crude revenues, but the impact was less severe on gas," he said.

But despite this we are still committed to fulfill our international obligations to pay our debts." Harchaoui added.

He said the government has earmarked 209.5 billion dinars (\$3.55 billion) in its 1999 badget to foreign debts, up from 178 billion dinars in 1998 and 132 billion dinars in the preous year.

He added Algeria speak total of \$5.0 billion on servicing its debts in 1998 but did not explain the discrepancy.

However, he pointed out that the country's foreign reserves of hard correscies shrank from over \$8.0 billion in 1997 to below \$7.0 billion last year "due to paying at the debts and lower of the which averaged at \$19.6 a far-

inton wants budget surpluses for pension, health care plans of living," he said.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -President Bill Clinton Tuesday proposed that future budget surpluses be used to shore up the federal pension plan and the health care system for a growin number of elderly.

In his annual State of the Union address, Clinton trumpeted the country's rosy economic picture. with nearly 18 million jobs. the smallest welfare rolls in 30 years and the lowest peacetime unemployment since 1957.

"From a deficit of \$290 billion in 1992, we had a surplus of \$70 billion last year. We are on course for budget surpluses for the next 25 years," he said.

But rejecting Republican calls for tax cuts, he said the surplus should not be spent until the pension sys-

57 Stupid

58 Surgeon's

DOWN

2 Florentine

painter Paolo

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59 Locks of hair

bone-scrapers

33 Saintly

tem "is truly saved." He therefore proposed using 60 per cent of the projected \$4 trillion in budget surpluses over the next 15 years — about \$2.7 trilto save the Social Security fund from its forebankruptcy in 30

"With the number of elderly Americans set to double by 2030, the Baby Boom will become a Senior Boom," the U.S. leader warned, "So first and above all, we must save Social Security (pension plan) for the 21st cen-

Clinton also proposed investing some of the surplus in the private sector.

'This will earn a higher return and keep Social Security sound for 55 years," said the president.

that roughly 16 per cent of the surplus over the next 15 years be used to bolster the federal Medicare health plan for elderly and disadieu Americans.

Faced with escalating health care costs. the Medicare Trust Fund is expected to run out of money in 2008 if no action is taken, experts warn. "If we work together, we

can secure Medicare for the next two decades and cover the greatest need of seniors affordable prescription drugs," Clinton said.

Clinton also said a little over 11 per cent of the projected surplus should be earmarked to fund Universal Savings Accounts -USA Accounts - in which Americans would be able to invest as they choose to

Peanuts

meet their retirement needs.

Under the plan. contributions from working Americans would be matched by an equal dollar amount trom the government, with larger matches going to low-income workers.

\$1,000 tax credit for the aged, ailing or disabled and the families who care for them. "Saving Social Security

Clinton also called for a

and Medicare is the right way to use the surplus. If we do so, we will still have resources to meet critical needs in education and defense," the president said.

In their response, Republican legislators dismissed Clinton's proposals and reasserted their party's priorities: tax relief and legislation to reform social security.

"Spending the surplus as he (Clinton) proposed will not save Social Security. It just temporarily props it up with some extra cash." sai Representative Jennifer Dunn of Washington state. Give Americans the choice to invest some of their Social Security dollars personal retirement in

accounts." Next year, there will be a \$63 billion surplus," Dunn added. "Mr. President, give it back."

She said Republicans were proposing a 10 per cent across-the-board tax cut for every working American, an end to the marriage penalty in the tax code and a cut in the death taxes so families won't have to sell their businesses

or farms when parents die. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said Wednesday he would not support investing U.S. Social Security funds in the Stock market as by President Bill Clinton in his State of the Union

address.

sentatives.

"What I do not support and did not support previously was the investment of government funds, especially Social Security trust funds, in private securities, especially equities.' Greenspan told the Ways and Means Committee of the U.S. House of Repre-

Greenspan's comments may fuel opposition in the Republican-led Congress Clinton's proposal. which calls for investing up to \$700 billion of Social

Security funds in the stock market and subsidise retirement savings accounts --biggest change in the U.S. retirement system's financing since its inception 64

Greenspan said government investment in private markets would interfere with the efficient allocation of resources in the econo-

Because I do not believe that it is politically feasible to insulate such huge funds from a governmental direction, I'm fearful that we will use those assets in a way, which one, will create a lower rate of return for Social Security recipients. but even a greater concern. that it will create sub-optimal use of our capital

resources and those assets

which create our standard

THE BETTER HALF

The White House says its proposal was aimed a boosting returns to the Social Security system and helping keep it soften unough at least 20 out benefit cuts.

But the proposal has already been rejected by Representative Bill Aich of Texas, the chairman of the House Ways and Means. Committee, and a major

group of corporate leaders. "Such direct investment runs contrary to the fundamental principles of democratic capitalism, and would result in undue concentration of assets in certain market segments, share price distortion, and market inefficiencies," the Business Roundtable said in a statement, urging Clinton

to reconsider his plans.

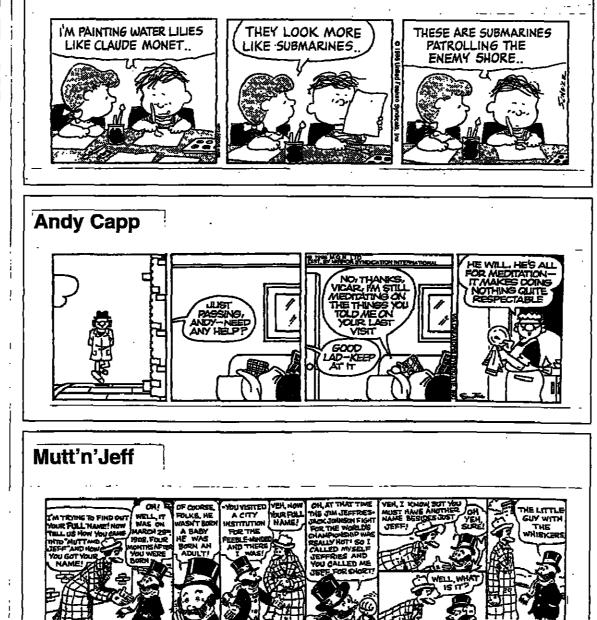
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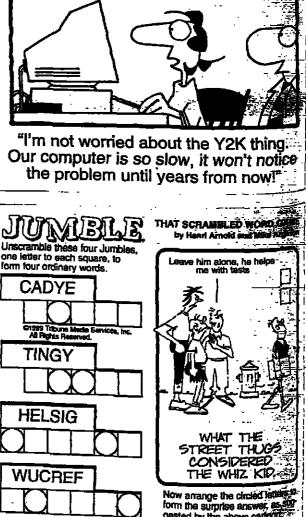
By Glasbergen

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams 1 Standard practices 8 Granted as due 15 Misbehaved 16 Iceberg competition Reprimander 19 Find a buyer 22 Unknown John 23 Hardships 24 Seamlike joint 25 Thornton 27 Playful mammals stronghold 31 Fills completely 32 Animal fat 33 Fire-sale 35 Borgnine Oscar-winner 38 Joke's target 39 Bishopric containing 42 Old nutmeats 43 Frightens 45 Part of VAT 46 Archaeological Semi-soft EPSOM BEG REAPS JACOBMARLEY LET creamy cheese 47 Supreme Court Began to grow Justice David

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A review of news from the Arabic Press

Muasher hints that Arab Bank should lead development, modernisation process of the banking sector

* * DESPITE THE tall buildings, and the annual profits achieved the Arab banking system is still traditional and, as such, it will face major challenges over the coming few years as a result of the liberalisation of financial services and the globalisation in the banking sector. said Jordan National Bank Board Chairman Rajai Muasher. He noted that Arab banks have been unable to upgrade the Arab capital market and did not succeed in creating the financing mechanism required to advance the economic development sufficiently enough to remedy key imbalances suffered by most Arab economies.

Speaking in an interview about the challenges resulting from the liberalisation of financial services, Muasher said the Jordanian banking system, like other Arab banking systems, is a traditional one conducting normal and customary

"It did not enter until now many of the fields and financial tools especially needed in the capital market." Muasher said auributing that to the absence of legislations that would regulate these financing aspects and tools.

The board chairman who held the post of industry and trade minister in the past cited as examples regulations for mutual funds, long-term financing through bonds and trading in these bonds in financial markets beside many other tools which could be used. He indicated there are no mechanisms, which are usually issued by the Central Bank, to regulate the tools in addition to the absence of legislations needed to issue them and trade them in a clear manner among the banks.

Noting that many proposals were presented to the Central Bank which showed high enthusiasm to develop financing tools. Muasher said the banking market is still very much behind in this regard. He stressed that the Jordanian banking market cannot continue without going along with the twentieth Century developinent in this respect and he emphasised that major efforts are needed from all sides including the Central Bank, the local banks and the Association of Banks in Jordan, "Except for the Central Bank which urges licensed banks to carry out new services, we feel that other parties are sometimes not serious in this endeavour," Muasher said,

Asked about who are responsible for this clear deficiency the former minister blamed many parties, "The fact is that in Jordan there is one large bank that depends on the Jordanian market for its resources but on Arab and foreign markets for much much more," he said. "If this bank does not lead the development and modernisation process, it would be difficult for the small banks to carry out such an operation.

Muasher said the structure of the banking system and the small size of the banks in the local market are both barriers to provide financing for large projects because the banks have to abide by international ratios and standards, "As such, the capabilities of the banks to expand their work depends on how much the capital can be increased," he said (Al Arab Al Yawm).

ARIES: (March 21 to April

19) You have an inner certain-

ty that everything's going to

turn out right, even if you can't

figure out how. That's OK.

Lebanese banking system described as sound by chief financial examiner

BEIRUT (R) - Lebanon's chief financial examiner has assured investors that commercial lending posed no threat to the integrity of the country's banking system.

The system is sound and quality assets continue to advance, helped by better management and more transparency in the industry," said Muhammad Baasiri, chairman of the Banking Control Commission,

Shadows were east on the loan portfolio last year when Standard and Poor's said Lebanon was among the countries with apparently robust banking systems which were in fact vulnera-

The rating agency said up to 40 per cent of the credit extended by banks could turn into bad loans if the economy dipped into recession. Bankers say doubtful loans comprised \$1.6 billion of the \$13.1 billion extended

by banks up to September. Provisioning, which stood at \$1.2 billion and covered 75 per cent of doubtful loans, is respectable by international standards, they

Lebanon's GDP growth fell from seven per cent in 1995 to 3.5 per cent in 1997 and two per cent in the first half of last year, according to Beirut's Banque Audi. The central bank said growth reached four percent last year.

The Banking Control Commission (BCC) comprises five members assisted by a team of 70 examiners. It was headed at its foundation in 1967 by current Prime Minister Selim Al

Baasiri is the first to serve two terms as head of the

He said the commission closely monitors and approves necessary provisions for doubtful debt and holds regular meetings with banks' management and external auditors.

"We conduct on-site and off-site examinations and look at most of the individual loans for each bank," said Baasiri, insisting the scrutiny of the system has not been hampered by strict banking secreey laws.

Lebanon is one of the last bastions of banking secreey in the world, offering more confidentiality Switzerland.

"There has been no unusual fluctuations in the growth of deposits to suggest money laundering," said Baasiri, pointing out there is an agreement brokered by the banks association setting forth procedures to combat money laundering.

He is confident Lebanon will return to its position as the banking capital of the Middle East, helped by a consolidation in the sector and more banks going pub-

Israeli market recovery not seen till second half

TEL AVIV (R) - The Israeli stock market can look forward to falling interest rates, faster economic growth and progress. on both economic reform and the peace process but not until after the May

17 elections, analysis said. "In the first half, the market will be trading in the shadow of elections," said Keith Phillips, Israel analyst for Societe Generale in London, "The lack of economic direction is important. I can't see any significant move on interest rates. so I can't see the market moving either."

Analysts said they were less concerned with who wins the elections - now shaping into a three-way battle between Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu and two left-ofcentre opponents - than that they produce a stable government able to tackle economic reforms and Middle East peace.

Most analysts said it makes little difference who wins the May 17 vote. because all the candidates would pursue similar policies, including Netanyahu. whose commitment to the Oslo peace pact with the Palestinians is unclear.

he's elected. Netanyahu will move forward with the peace process because 80 per cent of the population supports it," one analyst said.

thinks you're pretty cute. Truth

is, you feel the same way back,

although you'd never admit it.

Anyway, this person may have

an outrageous plan for you

today. Sure it's crazy, but what

the heck? You only live once,

Analysts for the most part discounted the near-term threat of stepped-up government spending in the run-up to elections.

"You can't put another couple of billion shekels into the budget so quickly. There will be changes in the budget and budget arrangements law, but they won't be significant," said Micha Goldberg, head of research at Nessuah Zannex Securities.

Nevertheless, most analysts said the Bank of Israel would adopt a more cautions line than the fundamentals demanded until the political situation was clarified.

Israeli inflation is expected to fall to about five percent this year, after a brief surge in September-November that raised the 1998 figure to over eight per cent. The central bank's base rate is currently an annual 3.5 per cent.

"Into ist rates will fall very slowly, maybe 0.5-0.75 percentage point, until election day. It depends on the extent to which (Netanyahu) engages in election economics," said Gidi Halpem, a portfolio manager at Bank Hapoalim's Peilim divison.

For a market like Tel Aviv, which is driven by interest rates, that is not good news. Besides slowing the economy, high rates discourage equity invest-

ments. "Forget it," said Halpern, when asked if retail investors would be coming back to the stock market after a five-year absence. He said with two-year deposits paying an inflation-linked six per cent. stocks held no attraction.

The good news is set to begin on election day May 17 — or June 1 if prime into a second round.

Analysts argue that interest rates should begin coming down just as an upswing in the business eyele begins.

Brokerage house Nessuah Zannex said in a report it is looking for the economy to grow at an an annual rate of three per cent in the second half from a preliminary 1.9 per cent for all of 1998, Interest rates could fall three percentage points by the end of the year, leaving real rates steep but punters happy, it said.

"What's more important is the momentum going down than the actual rates. Goldberg said.

Foreign investors bailed out of Tel Aviv in the wake of Russia's financial crisis last year, but analysts are sanguine about prospects of luring them back during 1999.

They say Tel Aviv share prices are cheap, with one analyst estimating that shares on the Tel Aviv 100 benchmark index are trading at 12.5 times 1999 prospective earnings. All the foreigners need now is to get over the elections hump.

"It looks like one of the most stable environments to be in," said Phillips, comparing Tel Aviv to other emerging markets.

But even with a stronger second half, analysts are not looking for a banner year on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. One analyst said he would be happy with a 10 per cent gain, compared with 1998's 3.3 per cent rise, which was a 12.4 per cent loss in dollar terms. "I don't think it's going to

be a terrific year, but it should be better than 1998," Phillips said.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You've had lots of great career opportunities lately, although it may have seemed more like a constant hassle with folks who outrank you. They wanted to see if you could handle more responsibility. By now. you've probably made your move, either upward or laterally, but hopefully into a career that fits you well.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Looks like there's some son of a buzz out there, possibly concerning your career. You might think its something you can't do anything about. Why pay attention if your vote won't count? Well, if something's going to change, you want to know about it before it happens, so you can get into the right position early, before the rush. GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) There's a way you can earn

more money, but you'll have to figure out what it is. Someone you love can give you a shove in the right direction. In fact, this person may have been pushing you for quite some time. Use skills you've already acquired and education you've already received and you can have the life you've been

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) You could receive some kind of gift today from a person who's far away. This could be a legacy or a bit of friendly advice pointing you in the direction you should go to achieve wealth and social status. You're caregiver first and foremost, but it wouldn't hurt to have a litthe something in the bank.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You could receive an unexpected gift today, possibly an increase in the value of your stocks or a payment you're receiving. In any case, its coming to you partially because of the work you've done and partially because of the strength of your character. It will add more to our personal confidence than to your spending cash.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) This is an excellent day to find a nice gift for someone you love. You're generous, but you don't always get around to doing things when you first think of them. So even if its not your dear friend's birthday or anything, a little gift would be a thoughtful gesture. It might make up for some things you've said that you wish you

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) The highest form of enlightenment is to serve one who serves. As a Libra, it seems natural for others to serve you. But for you to follow others around, doing whatever they want, providing for their every need... well, you don't want to make a habit of it. Today, however, its practically a requirement. If you do it cheerfully,

you'll make more points. SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) That Aquarius sun locuses your attention more on domestic matters. The Pisces noon is in your solar fifth house of love. Jupiter is in Pisces. too, making you lucky in love right now. Mercury in Capricom indicates that you're intelligent and learning quicky. Together, they indicate a strong possibility for domestic bliss, as well as a career opportunity opening up.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There's something you want for your home, and there might be a way to finagle the deal. You have several options to choose from. You can either get the item for less money, or you can generthe more money and get the item retail. It isn't clear which route you'll choose, but it does look like you're getting what

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Your intuition should be working well today. It could be prompted by a clue from someone you admire. This person could be doing or saying something that leads you to the next logical conclusion. Is it logic or intuition at work? It doesn't matter, Inside information today will lead you to make a shrewd deal. Follow a hunch.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) All sorts of valuables continue to pour into your pocket. You may have to share with a partner, but that's OK. There's plenty to go around. Investments you make now should turn out well for you, generally speaking. If you're betting on yourself, or your ability to advance in your career, the odds are in your favour. PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Abundance is coming your way — abundance of love, abundance of attention, maybe even abundance of money. You could be much more influential than you ever dreamed possible. Even people who don't usually listen to anybody could be listening to you now, so choose your words carefully. Stay pragmatic and realistic.

Birthstone of January: Garnet - Rose Quartz

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

Having faith in your intended outcome is much more imporright? Well, you may not be too sure about that, but you do tant. Go ahead and visualise yourself already successful. Encourage your team to do the same thing. These little mind

tricks can be quite effective. TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You know what needs to be done, and you've probably been hard at work doing it. That's just the way you are. But somebody who's a little short of temper could be getting impatient. Tell that person, nicely, to cool it. You'll get the job done as fast as you can. Try to stay flexi-

ble, even under trying circumstances. GEMINI: (May 2) to June 21) You're amazing today. You're agile and quick, and an inspiration to others. You'd be the first choice for anybody's team. Continue to push hard on your career goals, but give yourself some time to party. You've worked hard this week, and you have plenty of reasons to celebrate. If not, you'll make some up by the time you and the

gang get together. CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) Looks like somebody's trying to browbeat you in some way, but it might just be the other person's brusque tone of voice. You don't like to be talked to with any sort of anger. The person who's upsetting you today is most likely just an angry individual at times, so don't take it person-

LÉO: (July 23 to August 22) The moon's transit through Aries can get you a little agitated. Its going through your solar ninth house of travel, and its going to come right up against Saturn, which is already there. Saturn represents history, so if you can go back to a familiar place this weekend, that would be perfect. If you can do it with an old friend, even better.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You're a thrifty person normally, but right now you just don't feel like it. You'd rather go out and buy all those fabulous things on sale. If you can convince yourself that you're actually saving by doing that, you might be able to work a deal. It looks like there's something out there that does have your name written all over it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 23) Somebody you admire

HOROSCOPE

know when an offer is just too good to refuse. SCORPIO: (October 24 to November 21) You're generally a calm, placid sort of person, at least on the exterior. Deep down inside, you're more like a tiger, and that tiger could come to the surface today. Somebody you work with is irritating you so much you can hardly stand it. Don't get into a pointless fight. Keep your cool, and your superiority will be obvious.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You're in the mood for love, and taking a trip, not necessarily in that order. If the one you love has a practical streak, you'll get demerits for leaving work early, so don't even try it. Instead, make sure your check is in the bank before you pack up your

pienic basket and head for the hills. CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) It looks like there's some sort of disruption today concerning home, family or real estate. Maybe a mess needs to be cleaned up at home. Maybe you need to have a discussion with a family member about a misunderstanding. If its real estate, its a fixer-upper that you'd find. Whatever it is, it'll be worth the effort.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) Today, you're on the path to a new discovery. Don't try to do it all by yourself. Just as you pass information along to one who needs it, so can someone else give information to you. From where you're standing, the answer is not obvious. From where the other person is standing, it is. All you need to change is your perspec-

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) This looks like a good day to go for promotions. Someone in authority has new plans and wants to put them into action. If you can find a way to help. you'll be a valuable resource. You need to be creative, inventive and maybe even a little assertive. If the other person doesn't come to you with a plan, take one to him or her.

Birthstone of January: Garnet - Rose Quartz

Ford to cut 8,800 jobs

DEARBORN. Michigan (AFP) — Ford Motor Co. has announced here that it would slash \$,800 jobs worldwide and expected to record total charges of \$630 million after taxes.

In a statement released at its headquarters here. Ford said it anticipated a pre-tax charge of about \$730 million for retirement and separation pro-ള്മ്പാന്നട്ടം.

Under the special programmes, which had been previously announced, the world's number two carmaker said that 4.600 jobs would be cut in Latin America, 2,200 in North America and 2,000 in Europe.

It was providing additional details on charges it expects to take following directional estimates of two of the charges in its third-quarter 10-Q report filed with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission last October.

Ford said it anticipated a pre-

tax charge of about \$110 million to write off its net exposure to Kia Motors Co., including Ford's share of Mazda Motor

Co.'s exposure to Kia. Ford sold its shares in Kia in a private transaction that closed in the fourth quarter.

Ford also expects to record a pre-tax charge of about \$110 million linked to the transfer of its transmission plant in Batavia, Ohio, to a new joint venture company formed by Ford and Germany's ZF Friedrichshafen AG.

The joint venture company will build continuously variable transmissions and the transaction is due to be completed in

the first quarter of this year. Meanwhile Ford's Board of Directors declared a first-quarter dividend of 46 cents a share on the company's Class B and common stock, unchanged from the fourth quarter of 1998.

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Viking raider leaves fleet in disarray

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Christian Ruud, from skiing-mad Norway, left a gaping hole in the Australian men's singles draw when he sank the Spanish Armada flagship here Wednesday.

The 26-year-old Norwegian, ranked 86th in the world, outlasted Alex Corretja of Spain, the No. 2 seed, in four sets 3-6. 6-3, 6-1, 6-1.

Only nine of the men's 16 seeds had survived the first two rounds.

The top seeded players left in action were Pat Rafter of Australia, the third seed, and Andre Agassi of the United States. No. 5. after the withdrawal of Marcelo Rios with a stress fracture of the back on the opening day.

Either Rafter or Agassi could take over as World No. 1 from Pete Sampras if they win this tournament but Rafter. who on Wednesday brushed aside fellow Australian Mark Woodforde, faces his first serious test when he tackles Thomas Enqvist in the third round.

The Swede has won his 10 matches in Australia in the last two weeks, winning Hardcourt Australian

Championships and Kooyong Classic. The women's competition has gone largely to form.

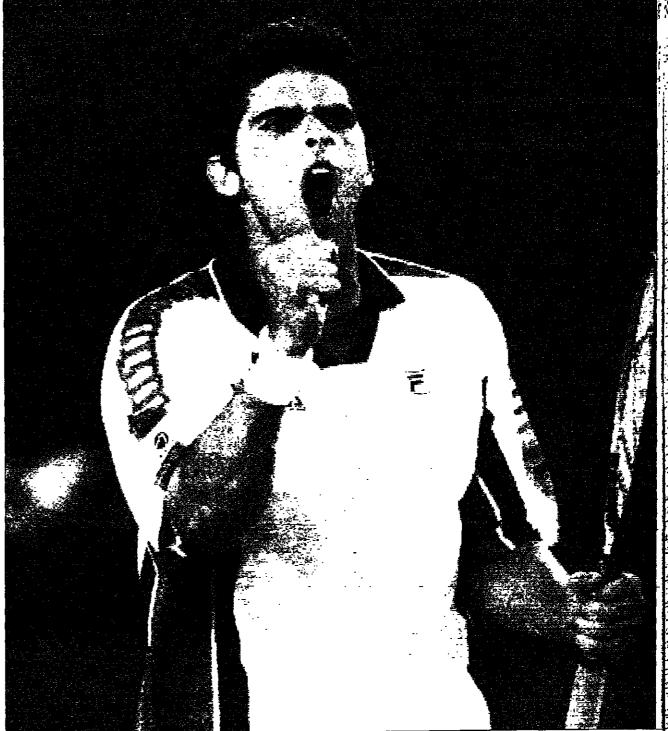
Top seed Lindsay Davenport and Wimbledon champion Jana Novotna continued to expose the limitations of their lower-ranked opponents and the biggest upset was the defeat of Switzerland's eighth seed Patty Schnyder by promising French woman Amelie Mauresmo.

Davenport beat Argentina's Florencia Labat 6-2, 6-1 in 47 minutes but Novotna was cross with herself for dropping a set against Slovakian Henrieta Nagyova, who reached the fourth round here last year.

She now plays Spaniard Maria Antonia Sanchez Lorenzo, who brought Jennifer Capriati's mini-revival to an



Amelie Mauresmo of France reacts during her 6-7, 6-3, 7-5 win over Patty Schnyder of Switzerland at the Australian Open Tennis Championships in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, January 20, 1999 (AP photo)



Mark Philippousis of Australia celebrates his victory over Michael Chang of the USA after their marathon five set second round match at the 1999 Australian Open in Melbourne 20 January. Philippousis defeated Chang 7-6, 2-6, 6-3, 5-7, 7-5 (AFP photo)

in tatters with only Juan Alonso still afloat of the 14 Spanish contingent who headed for Melbourne. He was due to meet defending champion Petr Korda of the Czech Republic of Thursday.

Alonso is best known for going out with Martina Hingis last year.

Spain's No. 4 seed Carlos Moya, the French Open champion, lost to Germany's Nicolas Kiefer and 12th seed Albert Costa was put out by Martin Damm of the Czech Republic.

Local hero Mark Philippoussis, 14th seed, broke Michael Chang in the 11th game of the fifth set to hold serve for the match and set up the possibility of a replay of the U.S. Open final with Rafter in the fourth round.

Tim Henman advanced to the third round of the Australian Open for only the second time after surviving a scare against Australian serve and volleyer Sandon Stolle.

Stolle, ranked 240 in the world, had the sixth seed and No.1 Briton struggling in the first three sets, before he pulled his game around to wrap up a 4-6, 7-5, 4-6, 6-1. 6-4 victory in three hours six minutes.

Henman will now line up against huge-serving Swiss Marc Rosset in the third round.

South African Wayne Ferreira, back in form after a string of injuries, set up third round clash with ninth seed

Richard Krajicek. Ferreira beat Czech Daniel Vacek 6-4, 2-6, 6-3, 6-1 while Kraiicek, who made the semi-finals here in 1992 and won Wimbledon in 1996, cruised past Argentinian Mariano Zabaleta 6-3, 6-2,

Slovakian Karol Kucera, a surprise semi-finalist last year, continued his quiet but steady progress, disposing of Italian Davide Sanguinetti 7-5. 6-1.64

The number seven seed, who last year knocked out World No. | Pete Sampras now plays young Russian Marat Safia. who knocked out Brazil's forme French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten in the fifth set.

According to the players...

MELBOURNE (AFP) - Australian Open briefs on Wednesday: Venus Williams owns the fastest women's serve at the Australian Open and has struck a blow for the women's tour by clocking the same velocity as Michael Chang.

The powerful Williams' fastest serve registered 185kmh (115mph), the same as Chang, which was the 43rd fastest

among the men. The top men's serve so far belongs to Richard Krajicek and Greg Rusedski

with 213 kmh (132mph). Jeff Tarango's view on the festering Petr Korda drug controversy?

"It's just a really dark moment in tennis, and I wish that they would resolve it. you know, quicker than the impeach-Professional tennis players are not

always the ones to ask about opponents. Nineteen-year-old Amelie Mauresmo of France was asked what she knew about her next opponent after knocking out Swiss eighth seed Patty Schnyder. "Nothing. She's Australian?"

Her third round opponent Nicole Pratt is indeed Australian. The 25-year-old has never got beyond the second round in eight Australian Opens.

Lindsay Davenport's most cherished possession is not an expensive car nor a piece of jewellery, but a fax sent to her by former greats, Martina Navratilova, Chris Event, Billie Jean King and Tracey Austin when she reached the top

"It is hanging in my bedroom at home. They all wrote little messages saying welcome to the club and stuff

Even Sylvia Plischke of Austria was not proud of her upset win over

Germany's Anke Huber of Germany Germany's Anke Huber of Germany | Making | Makin tennis is about," she said of a match

which coughed up 152 unforced enors A slip of the tongue... International Tennis Federation president Bian Tobin defending tennis against dive proliferation.

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"The point we are trying to make here is the sport itself is not rotten. It's not as if we suddenly uncovered a whole cache of dopers, you know. It's not like cycling or football.... I didn't say that

What can you do when you've got a tennis elbow? Try magnet therapy, 3379 Lindsay Davenport.

Lindsay Davenport.

It worked for the best players women's tennis, who has been smit gling with the injury for six months

"It's amazing." she says. "I mean hy arm, my elbow was bad for the last six months of last year. It hunt a lot through live --December and I swear I did this magnet | 1000 -

therapy thing."

She said she put her arm under a She said she put her am machine holding a giant magnet for the magnet for t hours and hey presto... "It has not in

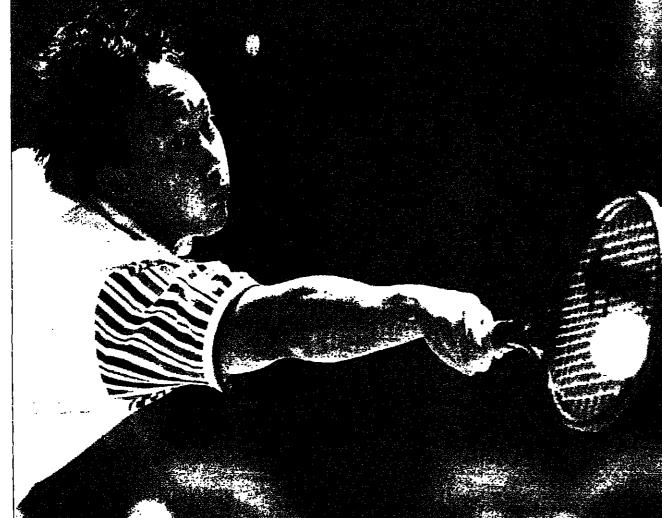
me one bit since. Marat Safin, the next big thing in tennis, had to do some quick thinking during his press conference after ter

ing Gustavo Kuerten. A observant reporter glimpsed a my

on the young Russian's finger.
"Are you engaged, as you are warms a ring?"

"No, no, just a compromise."
"Just a girlfriend?"
"Yeah, Spanish, I mean, I'm 18 Just

"Is that a wedding ring then? "No, no, on the right one, on the rel



Michael Chang (File photo)

Feisty McEnroe wants Davis Cup upgraded

NEW YORK (AP) — Almost 40 now and a member of the Hall of Fame, John McEnroe is still feisty and ready to defend the United States' honour at the Davis Cup.

He is convinced he could do as good a job, at least in doubles, as most of the players showing up lately.

McEnroe, elected Tuesday with Australian Ken McGregor, never has quite figured out the deterioration of Davis Cup on the tennis landscape. Many players prefer to show up at smaller tournaments where they can earn ranking points and prize money, both unavailable, at the Davis Cup.

When top players make that choice, it leaves McEnroe puzzled and troubled. "What more can you ask than a chance to represent your country?" he

said. "Tennis is a selfish, individual

There's no better way to blow off tension than to play Davis Cup." McEnroe played Davis Cup tennis for 12 years, posting a 59-10 record. He holds six Cup records, including most singles victories (41), and seems almost as proud of those wins as the seven Grand Slam titles, 77 singles and 77 doubles championships that led to his election to the Hall of Fame in his first year of eligibility. He was part of five winning Davis Cup teams.

Sometimes, McEnroe said, he played Davis Cup at times when he might have preferred to be doing something

"It wasn't easy to lose to (Jimmy) Connors in five sets at Wimbledon, then go play Davis Cup," he said. "I was exhausted, but what better thing could I do? "The tradition of the sport is important. Davis Cup is important for the game. It's bigger than the players in my opinion. Others feel differ-ently, apparently." Last fall, with Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi saying they wanted no part of it, the United States Davis Cup team was composed of ailing Jim Courier, who pulled out because of an arm injury, veteran Todd Martin and two rookies, Justin Gimelstob and Jan-Michael Gambill. They lost 4-1 to Italy.

McEnroe was stung by the outcome. "I can lose as easy as they did and bring some energy to it," he said. "I'm not quite sure why people don't think I can play doubles. I'm hitting better than I have for six or eight years. My stated goal is to be the George Foreman of tennis." That said, there has been no invitation to play. So McEnroe will do his hitting in seniors matches. He is No. I on the Nuveen Seniors Tour with eight victories this season. He also functions as the conscience of the sport, reminding players to think about their priorities.

"When you look back on your career, what do you remember?" McEnroe said. "Being part of the Davis Cup or your ranking and the money you won? You don't put aside the chance to represent your country." In the first round of the next Davis Cup, the United States will play at England. The Americans' assignment will be all the more difficult if its top players stay home and the British team includes Top 10 players like Tim Henman and Greg Rusedski.

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Federal grand jury to begin hearing testimony in Salt Lake case

ndependent investigations of widespread Olympic private scandal are taking a

13 amplituded by IOC investiresigned Tuesday. Ping Reggman of Finland demethrary wrongdoing, but said the could no longer funcnon & an IOC member.

in a speciment from Helsinki. partement said she had been recoand perhaps naive in my must in other people. ex-husband. briefly for the Salt Lake City hid committee and for 20 months in an Ontario government job initiated by the Toronto committee bidding for the 1996 Summer Games.

Biame Haeggman's job with Ontario's Natural Resources Ministry was arranged with the belp of the Toronto committee that bid for the 1996 Summer Games. The committee also paid the Haeggmans' \$ 650-amonth rent in Sault Ste. Marie.

il Henderson, who was of the Toronto bid comsaid the rent money was sed to be repaid by the mans, but he was unsure er it was. He denied it an anempt to win Pirjo man s vote.

the wake of Pirjo gman's resignation, the Street Journal said esday that a draft report e scandal, written by IOC resident Richard Pound, ates as many as 16 IOC

he report said the members accepting more than \$ 780,000 in payments and gifts from Salt Lake City Olympic officials during and after the successful effort to play host to the 2002 Winter Games

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Pound also was quoted in Wednesday's Kitchener-Waterloo (Ontario) Record as saying he himself was once urned down a \$ 1 million bribe fine the differ in connection with a television deal.

He cited the declined offer as rvidence of the high standards of some IOC officials.

Pirjo Haeggman was among ine IOC members accused of rigus violations who faced

possible expulsion, an official close to the investigation told The Associated Press, Four other members have been cited for minor violations and face warnings or no sanctions.

While Haeggman was the first IOC member to resign since the scandal broke, three other Olympic officials also have quit.

They are Salt Lake Organizing Committee President Frank Joklik and Senior Vice President Dave Johnson, and Alfredo Li Mont, the U.S. Olympic Committee's senior director of international relations.

Tom Welch, who headed the Salt Lake bid committee. resigned in 1997 after being accused of spousal abuse.

Welch's former secretary, Stephanie Pate, was to talk to federal investigators in Salt Lake City Wednesday.

Her attorney, David Watkiss, said she was subpoended to appear before a federal count panel, called a grand jury, but asked instead to meet with investigators privately.

Pate was not a "player" in the bribery scandal. Watkiss said. "We just did what we were instructed to do." Watkiss said, using the plural form lawyers sometimes use for their clients.

Watkiss said he assumes investigators want to ask Pate about the reports of lavish gifts. cash, scholarships and free medical care given to IOC members by Salt Lake bid boosters. "We're going to meet with

the government and then the government can decide whether it wishes to present Ms. Pate before a grand jury," Watkiss said Tuesday. "The grand jury appearance can be much shorter once the government understands what she knows and what she doesn't know." The lawyer said he advised Pale against talking to other investigators looking into the Olympic mess until after she talks with the Department

"Our bottom line is we're trying to cooperate with the Department of Justice investigation to the best of our abili-

Watkiss said. Other lawyers representing key players in Salt Lake's bid have either not returned calls or made no comments when contacted by The Associated Press on Tuesday.

A Justice Department official confirmed that more than one subpoens for grand jury testimony has been issued. The Salt Lake Tribune, without citing a source, said as many as a dozen people have been subpoended.

In addition to the investigations by the federal government and the IOC, a probe is being made by SLOC's ethics committee, which is due Feb. 11 but could be finished soon-USOC's investigation should be finished in February.

FBI spokesman George Dougherty said Tuesday the investigation likely will take

These types of investigations take a long time ... but we understand the urgency here to get this matter resolved quickly and so we're going to expedite our investigation." Dougherty said. "Obviously, we don't want it to drag out for a year or so." He declined to give specifies about the status of the investigation.

In other developments: _A member of an Olympic promotional group said at least two IOC members accepted offers prostitutes from the Amsterdam committee that bid for the 1992 Summer Games. Prostitution is licensed in parts

of Amsterdam. "I was there and saw it, IOC members being offered women and two accepting," said Prince Frederic von Saxe-Lauenberg, a member of the Pierre de Committee. He said the two were African members, but declined to name them.

Von Saxe-Lauenberg said

IOC members also were given video cassette recorders and their wives were offered diamond broaches by the Amsterdam committee. Roel Walraven, a member of Amsterdam's bid committee, admitted that IOC members had been given VCRs, but said he knew nothing "about visits to brothels or diamonds in hotel rooms," _Melbourne's bid committee for the 1996 Olympics arranged for an IOC delegate's daughter to play with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, a bid member said

A big retirement — maybe more rumours and another delay

NEW YORK (AP) Dennis Rodman dropped out. Antonio McDyess deliberated, Rod Strickland wavered and the National Basketball Association lockout settlement was delayed once again.

It was another day of waiting, wondering and waffling Tuesday, with the start of training camps and the onslaught of trades and free agent signings pushed back until Thursday as lawyers for owners and players haggled over the fine print of the new collective bargaining agree-

"It'll get done. It always gets done," agent David Falk said. "This just gives us more time to talk to people and refine our numbers.

The best example of the craziness was the "retirement" of Rodman. Hours after his agent,

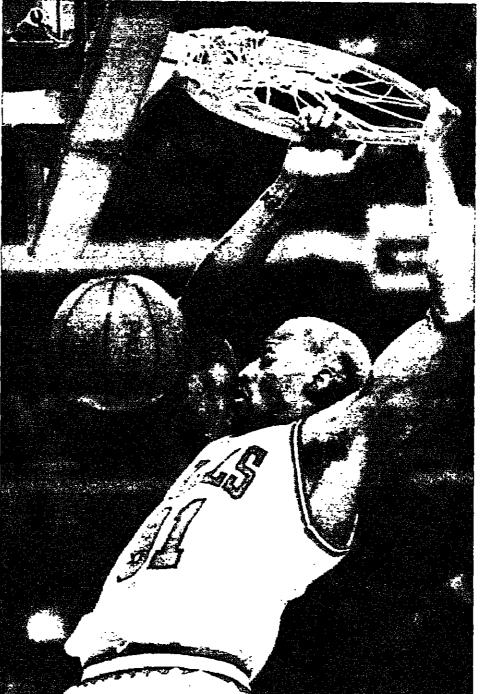
Dwight Manley. announced Rodman was leaving the game for good, the NBA's most outlandish player denied it.

"I'm not going to play this year," Rodman told Fox Sports News, "I am in limbo, but I'm not going to say I'm retired.'

That's not how his former coach heard it. In a strange twist earlier in the day, Chuck Daly of the Orlando Magie said he had heard Rodman had been traded to the New York Knicks for Buck Williams — a rumour that was quickly shot down.

Rodman, whose multicolored hair, body piereings and tattoos made a fashion statement across the NBA and beyond, has become the latest star to leave Chicago as the Bulls of Michael Jordan.

For now, the league loses a seven-time rebounding leader who once donned a wedding gown, kicked a cameraman, head-butted a referce, dated Madonna married Carmen



Dennis Rodman (File photo)

Falk's top free agent client, Strickland, was reportedly miffed at the offer being made by the Washington Wizards. Falk refused to comment on the status of Strickland's negotiations, but talk around the

guard was considering He seemed very happy signing with another team. McDyess, meanwhile. young guy and a future star put off for another day a in this league. But a lot of decision on where he'll

play — Denver or Phoenix. "It defies logic in my opinion." Suns owner Jerry Colangelo said. "We think league was that the point this is a great spot for him.

things have happened this Suns scrambling to execute

If McDyess chooses to move, it will leave the

a backup plan. There was

widespread that they would turn their attention toward Tom Gugliotta, who thought to have narrowed his choices to staying with Minnesota Timberwolves or joining the Nuggets.

The Nuggets also were wondering whether they would be spurned by Gugliotta in the event that McDvess stays in Phoenix. If so, they were expected to look to sign free-agent center Vlade Divac.

Divac flew back from Europe on Tuesday, and will have a choice of signing with Denver, Phoenix or Sacramento.

Also Tuesday. The Associated Press learned that John Starks and Chris Mills are the players who will be traded from the Knicks to the Golden State Warriors for Latrell Sprewell. Word of the Sprewell trade got out Monday night, just a few hours after another major trade was revealed --Scottie Pippen going from the Chicago Bulls to the Houston Rockets.

The Bulls also have signand-trade deals worked out for Luc Longley and Steve Kerr, and a sign-and-trade deal of Scott Burrell for Brent Barry was believed to be in the works.

Colungelo confirmed that the Suns will trade three of the five players they have under contract - Mark Bryant, Martin Muursepp and Bubba Wells - for

In another agreed-upon deal, the SuperSonics were set to send center Jim McIlvaine to the New Jersey Nets for veteran forwards Michael Cage and Don MacLean.

Makinen clinches victory at Monte Carlo Rally

Wednesday.

MONTE CARLO, Monaco tongue. limit (AP) — Three-time world tham proided thampion Tommi Makinen of Finland on Wednesday won the Monte Carlo Rally, beating his nearest His not need by almost two mindia to fee 2 ules.

Mitsubishi, had an overall time of 4 hours, 33 minthe share of the state of 4 flot seconds. Compatriot Kankkunen, who drove a Subaru, was second in 4 to the hard hours, 35 minutes, 35.2

Makinen driving

nours, 35 minutes, 35.2 seconds, according to times which were subject to confirmation.

Britain's Colin Rae, the 1995 model ontain's Colin Rae, the making his Ford debut,

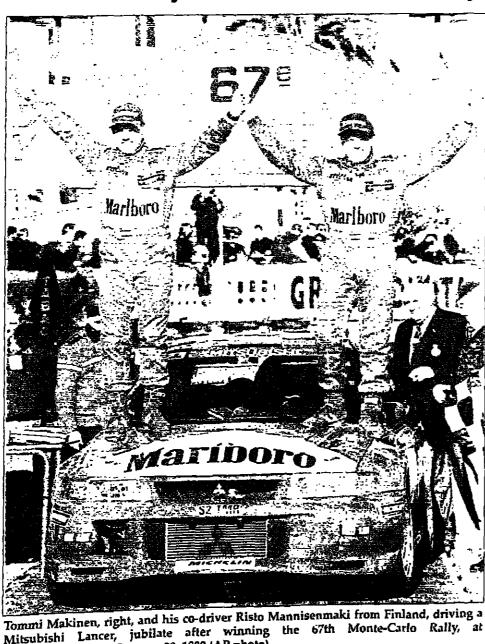
Belgium's Bruno Thiry Bruno Thiry in the fourth, and The first water in fourth, and Brancois Delecour of

France was fifth. National characteristics of five stages The three-day race conof five stages between Gap and Monaco. Research it was the first of 14 world nally rally competitions this

serond overnight, was forced to pull out during Wednesday's final stage. Defending champion Carlos Sainz dropped out within five miles of the

start on Monday. The Spaniard, driving a Toyota, senously damaged the front of his ear when he crashed off the road on dangerous ice just outside the town of Gap. Sainz. who has won the Monte Carlo Rally three times.

Was unhurt. He was one of 14 drivers that pulled out of the race during the first stage. Others included Spain's Luis Climent, who also came off the road, and Belgian Freddy Loix, who had engine problems.



Mitsubishi Lancer, jubilate after winning the 67th Monte-Carlo Rally, at Monaco, Wednesday January 20, 1999 (AP photo)

Winners of last 10 Monte Carlo rallies MONTE CARLO (R) - Winners of the Monte Carlo Rally, opening race of the world championship, in last 10 years: 1990 - Didier Auriol (France) Lancia Delta

1991 - Carlos Sainz (Spain) Toyota Celica 1992 - Didier Auriol (France) Lancia HF 1993 - Didier Aurlot (France) Toyota Celica 1994 - François Delecour (France) Ford Escort 1995 - Carlos Sainz (Spain) Subaru Impreza

1996 - Patrick Bernardini (France) Ford Escort 1997 - Piero Liatti (Italy) Subaru Impreza 1998 - Carlos Sainz (Sapin) Toyota Corolla 1999 - Tommi Makinen (Finland) Mitsubishi Lancer

Van Gaal roasted by Catalan media

BARCELONA (AFP) - Under-fire Barcelona coach Louis Van Gaal has been fiercely criticised in the Catalan media Wednesday after getting involved in a political row, following the signing of Holland international twin brothers Frank and Ronald De Boer from Ajax of Amsterdam.

The reigning Spanish champions now have eight Dutch players om the staff, alongside Van Gaal and two of his assistants, bringing the total number of Dutch personnel to 11 in a club that is seen as a standard bearer for the

Catalan identity.

The club has been derided in the Spanish media as Ajax

Barcelona and Hollandbarea. President of the Catalan autonomous government Jordi Pujol, while stressing it was not his job to tell Barcelona

who to buy, said he hoped the club would sign more Catalan players. Van Gaal, clearly unhappy at the criticism, hit back, saying: "Jordi Pujol, is he responsable for this club?" But the Catalan media clearly sympathises with its president.

Barcelona-based sports paper Sport said: "The exquisite delicacy with which Pujol expressed his disappointment with the sporting politics of Barcelona was met with a disproportionate reply by Van Gaal. Van Gaal's aggressive tone reflects his well-known

intolerance and has again offered a detestable, haughty and defiant image, but this time in respect of the president (of Catalonia).

Sport published a survey in which 71 per cent of Barca fans said they wanted more Catalan players at the Nou-Camp. While 74.4 per cent thought the foreign players were not of high enough standard, 63.2 per cent claimed the club had lost part of its identity. And 77 per cent questioned Van Gaal's sincerity - last year he pledged to win the Champions' League with a mainly Catalan side.

The football club's president Jose Luis Nunez said Monday, when he paraded the De Boer (wins, that he had no misgivings about the large Dutch contingent at the

"Dressing room unity is better with eight Dutchmen than with one Bulgarian, two Romanians, two Czechs. four Argentinians and a Brazilian."

He pointed out that Barcelona once fielded eight Basques and said: "I would like to have a poll to see if people preferred having eight Basques, a Bulgarian and someone from Aragon (a Spanish region) or the current situation.

Barca has long been seen as a symbol of the aspirations of the Catalan people and during the dictatorship of General Franco, widely seen as a symbol of Spanish colonialism, its importance to the people was encapsulated in the slogan "Mas que un club" or "More than a club." However, Barca vice-President Jaume Sobreques cast a

new light on the Dutch policy said that the players would be popular because "the club had chased the Spanish out of Holland in the 17th century". Goalkeeper Ruud Hesp, defenders Winston Bogarde and Michael Reiziger, midfielders Boudewijn Zenden and

Phillip Cocu and striker Patrick Kluivert are the other

Dutch players at Barcelona.

Fair Play awards for Iran, U.S. and Northern Ireland

ZURICH (R) - Iran, the States Northern Ireland were jointly awarded FIFA's 1998 Fair Play prize on Wednesday.

World soccer's governing body gave the award to Iran and the United States for their show of sportsmanship in a highly charged World Cup match in Lyon on June 21.

The Northern Ireland Football Association was awarded a share of the prize for their "continuing efforts to reunite the Catholic and Protestant communities", said FIFA in a statement. FIFA praised the fact

that on November 30 a match between Cliftonville and Linfield, clubs identified as being on either side of the sectarian divide, took place at Cliftonville's Solitude Stadium for the first time in almost 30 years.

FIFA President Sepp Blatter said the award to

the three was proof of football's role as a mediating force.

"In the middle of the World Cup the Iranians and the Americans provided a powerful demonstration of the effects of fair play when they not only joined in the spirit of FIFA's Fair Play Day on June 21 by posing together for the photographers before their match in Lyon, but also exchanged flowers and gifts among the players," Blatter said.

"The award, like that to Northern Ireland, is also intended to be symbolic for many other countries which have found themselves in a comparable situation."

The awards will be presented at the World Player of the Year gala in Barcelona on February 1.

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U.N. releases \$81m for Iraq's electricity sector

U.N. Sanctions Committee has released \$81.7 million in funding for Iraq's electricity sector from the "oilfor-food" accord, the United Nations announced on Wednesday.

The Sanctions Committee has approved a total of 17 contracts, some dating back to the third phase of the sixmonthly humanitarian launched accord December 1996.

The single largest contract. worth \$74.9 million, is for six gas turbine generators from China.

Power cuts of several hours are a common feature of daily life in sanctions-hit. Iraq. The oil-for-food accord aims to ease the hardships of the U.N. embargo slapped on Baghdad for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Under the accord. Iraq is authorised to export a fixed value of

crude to finance imports of food, medicine and other humanitarian goods. The fifth phase of the programme started at the end of November.

The U.N. statement on Wednesday also noted that \$16.7 million have been set aside from phase four for high protein biscuits and therapeutic milk, but Iraq has vet to submit contracts approval by the for Sanctions Committee.

The New York Times reported last week that Iraq. while protesting that U.N. sanctions were killing some 9,000 children each month, was not making full use of the humanitarian accord.

Baghdad, meanwhile, has complained that several sectors were being deprived of supplies under phase four because the United States was working within the Sanctions Committee to hold up Iraq's contracts with foreign suppliers.

The sectors named were electricity, oil. communications, transport, water and education.

The U.N. statement said a total of \$140.6 million worth of import contracts for spare parts for Iraq's battered oil industry have been approved for phase

Contracts put on hold by the Sanctions Committee amount to almost \$52 million, it said. At the end of December,

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan urged the Security Council to process all Iraq's contracts for oil industry spare parts "as expeditiously as possible."

Independent experts have assessed that the Iraqi oil industry, although pumping at full capacity, is "in a lamentable state," he said.



LENIN IN STORAGE: Svetlana Khodakovskaya, an expert at the state museum of political history of Russia in St. Petersburg. Wednesday adjusts a tag on a bust of Vladimir Lenin in the museum's storage reserve. Russia's Communist Party returned to its roots on Wednesday with a tribute to Lenin on the 75th anniversary of his death and said a triumph of socialism remains inevitable (Reuters photo)

Israelis plead not guilty to spying on Cyprus

LARNACA (R) — Two Israelis charged with spying on Cyprus repeated their not guilty plea at the start of their trial on Wednesday in a case which has strained relations between Israel and the east Mediterranean island.

Sitting emotionless in the dock as police presented sophisticated gadgets they say were found on the pair, crewcut Igal Damary and Udi Hargov denied charges of conspiring to spy on the island-

Hargov, 37, and Damary, 49, were arrested at their leased seaside apartment on Nov. 7 with listening equipment authorities say was used for spying. The pair have been in custody since.

The accused looked relaxed as they entered the courtroom, for the first time without handcuffs and holding silver worry

They denied the charges of conspiracy, spying and possession of banned listening equipment at another appearance last month but were called to repeat their plea on the conspiracy charge after prosecutors amended its

Authorities made the charge more general from its previous wording, which restricted the conspiracy to a charge of only spying on military facilities. The change was made with court permission after it rejected an objection from defence.

"With the equipment in their possession they had the capability of monitoring not only National Guard [army] but police frequencies and other government departments," Prosecutor George Papaioannou.

The charge of spying carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MOSCOW (AP) - Russia's foreign ministry refused

Wednesday to comment on a Turkish newspaper report that

Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan is hiding out at an airbase

in central Russia. The daily Turkish newspaper Hurriyet said

Ocalan has been at a military airbase in Nizhny Novgorod.

located about 400 kilometres east of Moscow, since he left

Rome last week. The foreign ministry would not comment, but

said it planned to release a statement about Ocalan on Thursday.

It did not say what the statement's contents would be. Russian

officials have repeatedly denied that Ocalan is in the country.

but at the same time have said Russia would not be obligated to

turn him over to Turkey since the two countries don't have an

Iraqi opposition seeks Arab League support

DUBAI (AFP) --- Iraqi opposition groups called Wednesday

for Arab foreign ministers at a Cairo meeting on Jan. 24 to throw

their weight behind efforts to topple President Saddam Hussein.

The call came in a statement signed by 47 opposition leaders,

but not the Kurdish factions which control northern Iraq in defi-

ance of Baghdad. The statement, received here, called for the

Arab ministers "to support opposition actions to finish off the

bloodthirsty and dictatorial regime, and to allow the Iraqi peo-

ple to choose their regime freely." The opposition asked the

Cairo meeting "to take diplomatic action toward tightening the

embargo against the regime, while lifting those sanctions which

Murderers of Iranian dissidents to face trial

TEHRAN (AFP) - The alleged murderers of Iranian intellec-

tuals and dissidents will be put on public trial shortly, a military

official announced Wednesday. "They will be tried in public and

can have a defence lawyer," a prosecutor of the Tehran military tribunal Mohammad Niazi said in an interview broadcast on

state television. The authorities say 10 people have been arrest-

ed in connection with the murders of nationalist opposition

leader Daryush Foruhar, his wife, Parvaneh, and two writers.

The murders have been blamed on rogue intelligence ministry

agents and a military court is presently investigating the case.

Niazi said however that the murderers "had acted without the

been threatened in mysterious letters and phone calls.

'Hostages in Yemen may be freed soon'

SANAA (AFP) --- A Dutch family of four and a British couple

held hostage in Yemen could be released soon, a Netherlands

diplomat said Wednesday. Pieter Dorst, deputy head of mission

at the Netherlands embassy, said the authorities had indicated

the kidnapping should soon be over. "Everyone is optimistic

that it won't take any longer," he said. "We keep our fingers

crossed. They [the authorities] told us so." Dorst added: "We

have indications from the authorities that they are treated well."

affect the people."

Russia silent on Ocalan location

Israel has denied the two were spying on Cyprus and diplomatic sources said Nicosia is under considerable pressure to drop the case.

Israel has stopped short of saying that the men were employed by an intelligence agency but former Prime Minister Shirnon Peres, on a visit to Cyprus last month. said the two were working to prevent a "terrorist" act against the Jewish state by Muslims. He did not elabo-

Police submitted a laptop computer, diskettes, three radio scanners, portable phones, cassette recorders and wiring they said was recovered from the defendants' apartment in the southern coastal village of Zygi.
Israeli experts will be in

Cyprus this week to examine the exhibits, their lawyer said. He declined to specify who

the experts were when asked by journalists.

Cypriot authorities say the two accused had scanners tuned into restricted police radio frequencies when they were arrested and one of them had been seen loitering outside a military base in the region the day before their detention.

The charge sheet accuses the two of "collecting information on the military installations of Cyprus which could be useful to another state." It does not say which state and police have refused to speculate.

Cyprus police say the offences allegedly committed by the two cover the period between Oct. 15 to Nov. 6 --the first date referring to another visit by the two to the island which coincided with a large scale military exercise by Greek and Greek Cypriot armed forces.

Netanyahu suggests office break-ins are a set-up

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) - Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu suggested Wednesday that burglaries at the Washington offices of political strategists for his main rival may have been set up to embarrass him.

For the second time in a week, burglars broke in Tuesday to the Washington offices of U.S. pollster Stanley Greenberg and reportedly took information related to Ehud Barak's campaign for the prime ministership.

"We witness, suddenly, a second break-in. The first was absurd but the second. in the same place, occurred while the FBI was watching." Netanyahu told Israel Radio. "I hope that we aren't dealing with political provocations whose intent is to create false accusa-

Barak said after that he wasn't worried that the stolen material could dam-

age him.
"I don't think a failing government can use or somehow improve from... papers. Barak told the radio. "Someone is in a serious panic if he is willing to pay so much money so that people will carry out criminal break-ins.

Another Barak associate. American political consultant Steve Rabinowitz, was quoted by the Haaretz newspaper Wednesday as saving that Barak's political opponents were responsible for the burglaries.

"It's clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that there's no coincidence." Rabinowitz was quoted as saying.

This is a theatre of the absurd," Netanyahu told Israel Radio in reaction to according to police. the reported Rabinowitz spread clouds of false accusations against the Likud." Barak. leader of the opposi-

London-based Islamist warns

homes and offices over the past few months. Barak's campaign manag-

reported break-ins at their

er. Tal Silberstein, said "it's 100 much of a coincidence" for the break-ins in Washington and Israel not to be related.

Elections have been called for May 17.

Burglars in Washington managed overnight Monday to get past a new, more comprehensive security system Greenberg Quinlan Research Inc. offices near Capitol Hill.

The system was installed burglars entered after through the roof last week, taking confidential records, a laptop and other items, including petty

The firm also has adv charges. "It's an attempt to U.S. President Bill Clinton, South African President Nelson Mandela, British Seven Israeli aides to Prime Minister Tony Blair and German Chancellor tion Labour Party, have also Gerhard Schroeder.

Talking doll astonishes Swedish family

STOCKHOLM (AFP) 🛶 🗚 six-vear-old Swedish boy thinks he got a great bargain when his parents bought him an "action man" doll that appears to pick up stray mobile phone conversations "Are you drunk already in the afternoon, Haakan?," the doll of Fredrik Trygg said loud and clear as it sat in the Trygg family's kitchen in Nonkoeping Sweden, TT news agency reported Wednesday. This astonished the family as the popular boy's dolls do not talk After the incident the doll kept quiet for a while. Then, sad denly, it said it needed to know how much milk to buy, and what kind of milk it should be

Dog owners charged fee in Russian town

dog's life in the industrial Russian town of Chelyahinsk where man's best friends from now on will be charged rent Owners of dogs living in this city 900 kilometres east of Moscow have been slapped with a 20 U.S. cent monthly rental fee for the privilege of enjoying the local water and electricity. Kommersan reported Wednesday. - But Chelyabinsk officials did no require cats, birds or goldfist to pay any rent at all, the authoritative business and said. The rent for dogs wasput at one-eighth that paid by herple because "animals afterall are not quite housen." Kommersant said.

When pigs fly...

PAW PAW (AP) - Andres

are refusing to sell a ticker to

the star performer in Debbe and Alicia Dacoba's ventiloquism act - Pork Chop an 8kilo Vietnamese poteniei pig. "I just want to know mouthed Tuesday from Alicia's lap, "Why can't Hily! I don't need no first class. I just want to fly with Alicia and Debbie." That may prove difficult after American Airlines decision last summer to ban porcine passengers from its seats. Now only small dogs and cats in special carrying cases can fly in the passenger cabin. Airline representatives have said Pork Chop is always welcome in the baggage compartment, but the Dacobas worry she might not be safe

in drug raid

MADRID (AFP) - Two kt ters written by Empera Napoleon Bonaparte as well as 17th and 18th century papel edicts were found by point pursuing suspected British hashish traffickers in Spain E Pais reported Wednesday Police discovered the history manuscripts in a safe during 3 May 1997 raid on a villa in eastern Spain, but investigate ing judge Balthasar Garzon had kept the information secret until this week; the paper said. Both written in 1813, one letter was written by Napoleon to Eugene. the son that his wife Josephine had during her first marriage to Alexande viscount

'Algerian rebels kill 16 soldiers in two ambushes'

ALGIERS (R) — Islamist rebels killed 16 soldiers and wounded 11 in two ambushes in Algeria, local newspapers reported on Wednesday.

Islamist militants set off a roadside bomb as vehicles carrying soldiers passed near Draa Al Mizan area in Tizi-Ouzou province, 90 kms east of Algiers, said La Tribune

As the bomb exploded, rebels hiding on both sides of the road machinegunned the soldiers, killing nine of them.

The attack took place on Sunday, La Tribune added. In a similar ambush, rebels killed seven soldiers and wounded 11 others overnight Saturday/Sunday Tagdempt area in Tiaret region, 220 kms southwest of Algiers, Le Matin newspaper

There was no immediate confirmation of the reports from the authorities who are tight-tipped on casualties among government forces. More than 40 soldiers were reported killed in rebel ambushes last year. The deadliest attack was last December when rebels shot dead at least 14 soldiers in an ambush in Oran area.

La Nouvelle Republique daily said on Wednesday troops have killed 96 rebels in several operations across Algeria during the Holy Month of Ramadan, which ended on Monday.

At least five civilians were killed when rebels slit their throats at a fake roadblock on Saturday in Bouira area, some 80 kms east of Algiers, said La Tribune on Wednesday.

Algeria has been racked by violence since early 1992 when the authorities cancelled a general election in which radical Islamists had taken a commanding lead.

More than 65,000 people - civilians, rebels and members of the government forces - have been killed in the seven years of strife in the North African country, according to Western esti-

Westerners to quit Yemen LONDON (R) - A Islamist cleric linked to a spate of kid-

nappings and arrests in Yemen on Wednesday urged all Westerners to leave the country or risk "coming back in a cof-Abu Hamza Al Masri, of the London-based Supporters of

Sharia (Islamic law), used a rare news conference to denv that his group was a vehicle for military action but demanded that "all Muslim groups rise and join hands to free the Yemeni people from the oppression of the Yemeni govemment."

Masri, an engineer who lost an eye and both hands in combat in Afghanistan and Bosma. said his stepson was among a group of five Britons being held on terrorist charges in Yemen and said his son was also being held by the authori-

He confirmed having had contacts with the leader of a hostage taking in Yernen was a kidnap gang that abducted 16

Western tourists in December claimed was the use by Britain Britons now under arrest to

Yemen to carry out bombings. "There is no direct connection with me. One is my stepson but I was not aware he was in Yernen. I am not cooperating with these people. They have not gone there with our per-

mission or support." he said. Yemen's foreign minister last week expressed concern to Britain over what he called "dangerous statements" by Masri to the British media and to Qatari television.

The Egyptian-born preacher said on Wednesday he had been under surveillance in Britain for some time and expected to be arrested. My phone is tapped... I

wouldn't be surprised if I were arrested. I don't believe it is a big price to pay to go to prison.

I want to speak out," he said.

Masri said the recent spate of direct protest against what he

but denied having sent the five and the United States of the port of Aden as a refuelling base in December's four day bombardment of Iraq.

All Westerners in Yemen were now at risk, he said, adding that his news conference was intended as a warning to travellers there.

"I would rather argue with you here and have you stay safe than for you to go to Yemen and come back in a coffin," he told journalists. "It is your duty to tell people to stay away."

Masri said the two elderly Britons and the Dutch family of four who were kidnapped on Sunday in northern Yernen may be held by Islamic militants but said he had had no contact with them.

These people [the hostages] might be double agents. he said. "What were they doing there? They are deliberately ignoring the message we are

Annan answers critics with campaign to defend office

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — U.N. limits of his office.

Foreign Relations, Annan rebutted allegations that he was appeasing Saddam Hussein and insisted his goal was to make Iraq obey U.N. Security Council resolutions.

"Whatever means I have employed in my efforts in dealing with Iraq. my ends have never been in question," Annan told the Council on Foreign Relations, an independent think tank. "By precedent, by principle, by charter and by duty, I am bound to seek those ends through peaceful diplomacy." In the past two weeks, newspaper

to persuade Iraq to resume cooperation with inspectors and culminated with reports in The Washington Post and The Boston Globe this month that the United States was spying on Iraq via the U.N. weapons inspection system.
"Back-stabbing at the U.N." said a

Jan. 7 Washington Post editorial criticising the espionage reports, which were apparently leaked from Annan's office in an attempt to discredit the chief inspector Richard Butler.

"The Indecent Decent Man," is the title of The New Republic's Feb. 1 profile of the U.N. chief. in which both his

tions down to a useless splinter and lift U.N. economic sanctions on Iraq." One of Annan's top advisers, John

Ruggie, countered the charges in an opinion piece in The Washington Post on Sunday, saying the allegations were without merit and triggered by frustration that Iraq hasn't obeyed U.N. reso-

The criticism comes in sharp contrast to Annan's relatively trouble-free first two years in office, when it seemed the career U.N. bureaucrat could do almost no wrong.

Annan spokesman Fred Eckhard acknowledged Tuesday that the honeymoon may be over.

When you are acting as he is at a certain level of prominence in world affairs, you expect to take your knocks," Eckhard said,

In his speech Tuesday night, Annan told his critics that a U.N. secretary general cannot be judged by the same standards as a head of state because he is bound by the demands and interests of 185 heads of state - the U.N. mem-

"With no enforcement capacity and no executive power beyond the organisation, a secretary general is armed only with tools of his own making," Annan said. "He is invested only with the power that a united Security Council may wish to bestow, and the moral authority entrusted to him by the

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Napoleon's letters found

Beauhamais.

Pluto may be demoted from 'planet'

Poor Pluto - its days as 60° of our solar system's one major planets may be min-bered. Two groups within the International Astronomical Union are thinking about reclassifying the relatively puny planer, either calling it 'minor planet' or humane in with an entirely new class of objects. For at least 20 years it's been obvious that Philo doesn't fit," said University of Maryland astronomes with A'Hearn, who heads
Planetary Systems
Division of the Intern
Astronomical Union

ALBUQUERQUE (AP)

knowledge of their superiors at the intelligence ministry." editorials and magazine articles have Secretary General Kofi Annan has attacked Annan personally and profesintellectual and moral judgement are Iran opposition figure receives death threats launched a campaign to answer critisionally, charging that he appeased severely attacked. cism of his role in the Iraq crisis, In a Jan. 8 column, a New York Saddam and undermined U.N. TEHRAN (AFP) - An Iranian opposition figure said defending his record and stressing the weapons inspections. Times writer called Annan "Saddarn's Wednesday he had been receiving death threats in the wake of The criticism began soon after greatest single asset at the U.N." the recent spate of murders of dissidents and intellectuals in Iran. Columnist A.M. Rosenthal charged In an opinion piece in Tuesday's Annan negotiated a February accord Habibollah Peyman, a strong critic of the Islamic regime, sent a New York Times and a speech with Baghdad on access for inspectors. that Annan worked with Iraq's sympaletter to Interior Minister Abdul Vahed Musavi Lari saying he Tuesday night to the Council on thisers to "whittle U.N. arms inspec-It escalated with his efforts in October had received threats that he would be shot in the head, newspapers reported. The 55-year-old dissident said his family had also